

U.N. to pay Gulf war claimants

GENEVA (AFP) — A U.N. committee is to pay out \$144 million Wednesday to thousands of individuals claiming damages from the Gulf war in the first disbursement under an "oil-for-food" deal with Iraq, the U.N. said. The U.N. Compensation Committee (UNCC) said 57,636 claimants, represented by 63 governments and one international organisation would receive an initial payment of \$2,500 each. The committee is funding the payouts from its 30 per cent share of Iraqi oil exports over six months. Nearly \$134 million of the initial payout will go to category "A" claimants — individuals forced to leave Iraq and Kuwait — and about \$7 million to category "C" claimants — individuals who suffered losses of less than \$100,000. Governments have submitted the documents on behalf of their citizens. Egyptians are receiving the biggest single chunk of initial compensation money, with 23,334 claims totalling more than \$58 million. They are followed by Sri Lankans, Indians and Bangladeshis.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية والرأي

Arab League rejects Iraqi charge

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid strongly denied Tuesday charges by an Iraqi official that he had hidden reports on Kuwaitis missing in Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war. Mr. Abdul Meguid told AFP he "categorically" denied receiving any such reports. Iraqi Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Ryad Al Qaisi was quoted Tuesday by London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat as saying that Mr. Abdul Meguid had "hidden from the media and Arab governments three reports on the missing Kuwaitis drawn up by his special envoy to Iraq and Kuwait, Abdullah Adam." Mr. Adam, a Somali, had made three investigatory trips to Kuwait and Iraq in 1991 and 1992 on the matter. Mr. Abdul Meguid said "the matter is completely baseless, I never received or concealed information on this subject." "I was painfully surprised to read this statement, and I informed the Iraqi delegate to the league Tuesday (Nabil Nejm) that the information was baseless."

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King to Netanyahu: Your actions have made peace appear like mirage; saddest reality is I do not find you by my side

King, in letter to Israeli prime minister, expresses genuine and deep distress over accumulated tragic actions threatening peace process and says he senses an intent to destroy all he worked to build
'I cannot accept your repeated excuse of having to act the way you do under great duress and pressure'



AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein has written a very strong letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressing his genuine and deep distress over the dangers posed to the peace process as a result of decisions and actions taken by the Israeli prime minister.

The Royal Court on Tuesday released the text of the March 9 letter, in which the King firmly stated that he could not "accept your repeated excuse of having to act the way you do under great duress and pressure."

"I cannot believe that the people of Israel seek bloodshed and disaster and oppose peace," the King wrote. "Nor can I believe that the most constitutionally powerful prime minister in Israeli history would act on other than his own convictions."

King Hussein sharply criticised Mr. Netanyahu's plans to build a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem and Israel's decision to hand over only nine per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians in a redeployment supposed to take place last week.

The King expressed regret over the "saddest reality" that he does not find Mr. Netanyahu working on his side to "fulfill God's will for the final reconciliation of all the descendants of Abraham."

"Your course of actions seems bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve..." the King wrote.

The King reminded Mr. Netanyahu of the commitments Israel undertook in its Feb. 15 agreement with the Palestinians on redeployment in Hebron and rural areas of the West Bank coupled with the implementation of other agreements, including the opening of a Palestinian airport in Gaza.

The King's letter disclosed that he had wanted to personally fly Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to Gaza on his plane after a

visit by the Palestinian leader to Amman on Sunday but that Israel had turned down the request.

"Now, suppose I had taken off nonetheless for Gaza, in the full right of a friend, then would you have ordered my fellow pilots in the Israeli air force...to prevent me forcibly or worse?" said the King.

"How can I work with you as a partner and true friend in this confused and confusing atmosphere when I sense an intent to destroy all I worked to build between our peoples and states," the King added.

According to reports from Israel, Mr. Netanyahu sent a letter in response to the King, the contents of which were not disclosed.

But he said from Russia, where he is on a two-day visit, that "there is no reason for this criticism and definitely no reason for this tone."

"I expect that our partners and friends in the peace process would not automatically adopt the Palestinian

position," he said.

"We insist on our right to build in Jerusalem, our united capital, and we also know that we are fulfilling the agreement on the redeployment," he contended.

Dore Gold, a Netanyahu advisor, said the King's letter "perhaps reflects the reality of our relations with Jordan — that is our relations are very sensitive to what happens on the Palestinian track."

Following is the full text of the King's letter released by the Royal Court:

Prime Minister,

My distress is genuine and deep over the accumulating tragic actions which you have initiated at the head of the government of Israel, making peace — the worthiest objective of my life — appear more and more like a distant elusive mirage. I could remain aloof if the very lives of all Arabs and Israelis and their future were not fast sliding

towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster, brought about by fear and despair. I frankly cannot accept your repeated excuse of having to act the way you do under great duress and pressure. I cannot believe that the people of Israel seek bloodshed and disaster and oppose peace. Nor can I believe that the most constitutionally powerful prime minister in Israeli history would act on other than his total convictions.

The saddest reality that has been dawning on me is that I do not find you by my side in working to fulfill God's will for the final reconciliation of all the descendants of the children of Abraham. Your course of actions seems bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve with the Hashemite family since Faisal the First and Abdullah to the present times. You cannot send me assurances that you would not sanction any further construction of settlements and tell me of your decision

to construct two roads to help all concerned Israelis and Palestinians alike and then renege on your commitment.

In pushing matters to the point of securing a U.S. veto at the Security Council, you have ill served the image and interest of your major ally and benefactor and our partner in peace making as the honest balanced peace broker.

Mr. Prime Minister, if it is your intention to manoeuvre our Palestinian brethren into inevitable violent resistance, then order your bulldozers into the proposed settlement site without doing much which is needed in recognition of Palestinian and Arab sensitivity, anger and despair and ameliorating the situation, then order the young Israeli members of your powerful armed forces surrounding Palestinian towns to commit wanton murder and mayhem, possibly resulting

(Continued on page 7)

King, Kabariti hold talks with Mordechai against backdrop of crisis in peace process

Jordan will face difficult choices if Israel continued to violate accords — Kabariti

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday held talks with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai on the Middle East peace process. The King and the Israeli minister held a closed-door meeting at Raghdan Palace, followed by another meeting attended by Jordanian and Israeli delegations.

The talks focused on the peace process and means of overcoming the obstacles facing it, particularly

on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

"The two sides stressed the need to remove all obstacles facing the peace process in order for the peace process to achieve its objectives," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali, the acting chairman of the joint

chiefs-of-staff and his assistant for intelligence affairs, the chief-of-staff of Royal Jordanian Air Force and the Jordanian ambassador to Israel in addition to members of the Israeli delegation accompanying Mr. Mordechai and the Israeli charge d'affaires in Amman.

Mr. Mordechai returned to Israel later in the day.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said earlier the Mideast peace process was facing a crisis and hint-

ed that Jordan could suspend its moves to normalise ties with Israel.

Tensions with Israel stemmed from its plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem and its decision to limit its redeployment from parts of the West Bank without consulting the Palestinians.

"The peace process is going through crisis, a real crisis," Mr. Kabariti said

(Continued on page 7)



Queen receives Dead Sea relic

PARIS (AFP) — A Dead Sea archaeological relic which could hold the key to secret hidden treasures was given to Jordan Tuesday after French experts spent more than two years restoring it.

The 2,000-year-old copper relic, which bears inscriptions apparently indicating more than 60 locations where treasures could be found, was presented at the Louvre Museum to Queen Noor (see page 3).

"I am astonished at the growing sophistication of technology," said the Queen, referring to French scientists who have been working to remove rust from the tolled piece of metal since it was sent to France in 1994.

The piece is to be put on show in Amman. Restorers have covered some of it in plexiglass to protect it from further damage.

French biblical experts have taken advantage of its stay in France to revise translations of the inscriptions, which indicated 64 locations of possible treasure hideaways.

Crown Prince returns

Middle East needs peace after half a decade of conflict. Prince Hassan tells London gathering

LONDON (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday returned home after a several day working visit to the British capital upon an invitation from British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind.

Prince Hassan was received upon arrival by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, His Royal High-

ness Prince Faisal and senior civil and military officials.

The Crown Prince delivered a speech at the Euro-Mediterranean conference in London and met with the deputy president of the European Commission (EC), Manuel Marin, and the deputy director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Stanley Fischer.

The Crown Prince and

Mr. Marin discussed developing Jordanian-European relations through a proposed partnership agreement between Jordan and the European Union (EU).

Prince Hassan's talks with the IMF official focussed on Jordan's economic reform programme, which has received the applause of the IMF.

In his address to the conference, Prince Hassan

(Continued on page 7)

Normalisation of relations in peril, Kabariti warns Israel in Parliament

Deputies, addressing special session, demands freezing of relations and collective Arab action to counter Israel

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Tuesday warned Israel that it will not be able to build normal relations with Arab and Islamic countries in general and Jordan in particular at a time when it pursues illegal measures on Arab territories.

Mr. Kabariti told a special Parliament session convened to discuss the Israel's settlement plans: "Israel has to realise that it is not possible for the peace process to continue

with the continuation of Jewish settlements being erected on Arab lands."

"We have adopted a clear-cut position with regard to Arab Jerusalem and the issue of Israeli settlements in Palestine," said the prime minister. "We consider Arab Jerusalem as occupied Arab land which must be returned to Palestinian sovereignty and that any unilateral change in its status before the final status negotiations have ended poses a serious threat to the entire peace process."

"This Jordanian position has been adopted by the Arab and other countries and the European nations and presented as a draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council, which was vetoed by the U.S. despite the American president's rejection of the Israeli settlement policy," Mr. Kabariti said.

Earlier Deputy Taher Masri, a former prime minister, called on the government to freeze the normalisation of relations with Israel and to reconsider its

position regarding all agreements with Israel.

Our relations with Israel is conditional upon the establishment of a comprehensive, just and durable peace and the exchange of land for peace, he said.

Addressing the special House session dedicated to discuss Israel's settlement policy and its decision to establish an Israeli settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem, Mr. Masri said Israeli Prime

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat suspends all contacts with Israel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Angered by Israel's limited West Bank pullback offer, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat ordered his Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to suspend all contacts with Israel, a Palestinian official said Tuesday.

The decision effectively put the peace process on hold, Israel and the Palestinians were to begin talks on a final peace accord next Monday, but it appears unlikely they will start on time.

Despite Palestinian anger, Israel will not give up more West Bank territory than the nine per cent planned for now or reverse decision to build a Jewish neighbourhood in Arab East Jerusalem, said David Bar-Ilan, an aide to Prime Min-

ister Benjamin Netanyahu. Palestinian leaders said they had expected to take control of some 30 per cent of the West Bank in this week's planned pullback, the first of three to be completed by mid-1998.

The Palestinians on Tuesday called for U.S. and Arab intervention and warned there might be new violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip unless Israel changed its policies.

Mr. Arafat on Tuesday invited diplomats from the United States, Russia, Japan, European countries and the Arab World to Gaza City this weekend to discuss the impasse in the negotiations, said Arafat spokesman Nabil Abu Rdaina.

(Continued on page 12)

U.S. ready to attend talks

THE UNITED STATES will attend an international meeting called by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to discuss the Middle East peace deadlock if it is formally invited, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"We're aware that Chairman Arafat has called for a

(Continued on page 7)

It's the Final Count Down
for the
Grand Opening
of
Y??T??T??S
Theme Restaurant & Bar

Clinton regrets Israeli settlement plan, but warns Palestinians

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton said Monday he regretted Israel's plan to build Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem but warned the Palestinians it would be a "terrible mistake" to resort to violence over the matter.

Speaking at a news conference with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Mr. Clinton said recent events showed how difficult it was to make progress towards peace in the Middle East and called on all parties in the region to redouble their efforts.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been embroiled in recent weeks by several events, including an Israeli decision to build 6,500 housing units for Jews in a part of Arab East Jerusalem and its taking steps to close four Palestinian offices in the city.

In addition, the top Palestinian negotiator resigned on Monday after Israel's decision to hand back nine per cent of the territory it occupies in the West Bank, rather than the 30 per cent the Palestinians had expected.

At least 10 Palestinians were injured in clashes on Monday with Israeli soldiers when 150 soldiers used clubs and guns to beat back 100 Palestinians trying to stop workers from opening a road for Jewish settlers near the West Bank city of Hebron.

"We've also been reminded recently of how difficult it is to maintain the momentum toward peace," Mr. Clinton said. "Clearly we're at a moment when all those with a stake in the peace process must rededicate themselves to making progress."

"We made it very clear that the decision to build (Jewish housing in East Jerusalem) ... would not build confidence, would not be conducive to negotiations. We would prefer strongly that it not have been made."

He added: "I still believe it would be a terrible mistake for the Palestinians to resort to violence. Every time they have done it, they wind up losing. They wind up getting hurt."

The U.S. president also defended the U.S. decision to veto a U.N. resolution urging Israel to abandon the settlement plan.

Mr. Clinton applied the same reasoning to the U.S. stance on both issues, saying the U.N. motion touched on "final status" issues that are to be hammered out in direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Those talks are due to begin on March 17.

The best thing is ... to let them be resolved by negotiations and to decide final status issues without interference by anyone from the outside," Mr. Clinton said.

But Mr. Mubarak politely disagreed on the issue of vetoing the U.N. resolution, saying: "It is unfortunate that the resolution was not adopted because it may have given a signal to the Israelis to stop any settlement activities, especially in the area of Jerusalem, which is illegal."

"But I hope in the future we could avoid this," he said.

The Egyptian leader had warm words for Mr. Clinton as a partner in the peacemaking process, nonetheless, but he said he was "alarmed" by Israeli actions — including the settlement decision — which he said tended to undermine peace efforts.

Mr. Clinton said he and Mr. Mubarak, who talked for about three hours on Monday, had agreed to seek ways to try to revive the Syrian-Israeli track of the Middle East peace process.

Their meeting was one of a series between Mr. Clinton and the main regional players as Washington assesses how to proceed towards a comprehensive peace settlement despite a backdrop of continuing Israeli-Palestinian strife.

Mr. Mubarak is the third Middle Eastern leader to visit the White House in the past month, following Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit on Feb. 13 and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's visit last week.

King Hussein is due here for talks next Tuesday.



SUDAN PYRAMIDS: People visit the pyramids in the Sudanese kingdom of Meroe in Sudan. Around 40 pyramids, which are home to 20 Meroeite kings, eight queens, three royal princes and a dozen of nobles whose rule spanned nearly five centuries from 592 BC to 350 AD, rise from the desert, 70 kilometres north of the town of Shendi (AFP photo)

U.S. assails Vatican over ties with Libya

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States on Monday criticised the Vatican for establishing diplomatic relations with Libya, which Washington accuses of sponsoring state terrorism.

"The United States does not approve of anyone establishing diplomatic relations with Libya. We don't believe that Libya is a government that one can do business with cooperatively," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told a news briefing.

"We've told the Vatican that we do not agree with this decision" because governments ought to maintain diplomatic isolation from Libya, he said.

The Vatican on Monday established full diplomatic relations with Libya despite months of what diplomatic sources called intense but private U.S. lobbying to persuade it to hold back.

Mr. Burns said Washington hoped that the Vatican, in talks with Libyan officials, would "concentrate on Libya's support for terrorism, Libya's opposition to the peace process, and the fact that we believe very strongly that there are two people in Libya who are suspects in the bombing of Pan Am 103."

He was referring to the U.S. airliner that exploded in 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people. The United States has offered \$4 million to anyone who can help find the two

suspects and bring them to justice.

"...We hope very much that anyone who happens to talk to Muammar Qadhafi or his colleagues will raise this Pan Am 103 issue," Mr. Burns said. "We can't forget that...people were killed."

Mr. Burns also issued a new call to diplomatically isolate Iran, claiming Tehran actively supports "terrorism" and opposes peace efforts in the Middle East.

Mr. Burns, asked about the diplomatic tours of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, said Washington "does not believe that countries in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world should engage in business-as-usual diplomacy with the Iranian government."

"That is a government which is trying to build a nuclear and chemical weapons capability," Mr. Burns said. "It is directly funding Hizbollah and Hamas and other terrorist groups. And it's resolutely opposed to the Middle East peace process."

"It's not a government, we believe, that should be shown a great deal of courtesy."

The top Iranian diplomat was in Turkey Monday following talks in Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. He is also scheduled to visit Sudan and Uganda, and is to go to Saudi Arabia to invite its leader to a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Teheran.

Ciller under strong pressure to call off coalition with Islamists

ANKARA (AP) — The pressure has never been greater on Tansu Ciller.

The politician is at the centre of a nail-biting waiting game before taking her turn as premier next year, when she succeeds her coalition partner, the leader of the Islam-inspired Welfare Party.

While she waits, she must fend off deputies in her own party angry over the deal with Islamist politicians, reassure the military that her Islamist partners really aren't so bad, and assuage the West that Turkey remains a faithful ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and legitimate candidate for the European Union (EU).

Mrs. Ciller, a 51-year-old U.S.-educated economist, heads the centre-right, Western-oriented True Path Party and is deputy premier and foreign minister in the government of Premier Necmettin Erbakan.

Under the coalition agreement, she will become premier July 1, 1998.

While political analysts argue the government's days are limited, Mrs. Ciller tries her best to prolong its life.

"I am the guarantor of the secular regime. Don't you worry," is Mrs. Ciller's stock response to critics opposing her partnership with Welfare.

Her message to the West is similar: "Wait until I take over the premiership."

Mrs. Ciller's own deputies have been calling on her to end the coalition. Her answer to them: A government crisis will hurt Turkey's efforts to join the European Union.

But the pressure on Mrs. Ciller grows every time Welfare tries to increase Islam's hold on Turkey.

Recent examples include rearranging working hours to fit fasting times during the month of Ramadan, a proposal to allow female civil servants to wear Islamic-style head coverings and a plan to build a mosque in Istanbul's central Taksim Square.

Such suggestions are explosive in the modern Turkish republic, founded in 1923

along such strictly non-religious lines that secularism has grown into a national ideology.

The proposals are deeply disturbing to the secular establishment of intellectuals and the middle class, and to the powerful military — which long has viewed its role as the guarantor of Turkish secularism.

The top generals, who once embraced Mrs. Ciller for giving the army full authority to fight the Kurdish rebels, are now angry at her. Earlier this month, they pushed for ultimatum-like directives for the government to protect secular traditions.

The Europeans, too, are concerned.

Nine powerful leaders of European Christian Democrat parties voiced a joint opinion in Brussels last week that Turkey should not join the EU.

That Mrs. Ciller finds herself in this position rests in part on a personal rivalry with the other main secularist political leader, Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party.

In 1995 elections, Welfare won only 21 per cent of the vote, but it was the biggest vote-getter because Motherland and True Path split the centre-right vote.

Mrs. Ciller at first resisted a partnership with Welfare. Instead, she formed a coalition with Mr. Yilmaz. But that lasted only three months because Mr. Yilmaz supported a series of corruption charges against her brought by welfare.

After she formed her coalition with the party, Welfare backed off and Mrs. Ciller was spared prosecution.

Because of the way seats are distributed in parliament, a Ciller-Yilmaz alliance is the only alternative to have Welfare in government.

That coalition does not seem likely right now.

And Mrs. Ciller has brushed aside President Suleyman Demirel's suggestions for parliament to call a vote ahead of the scheduled elections in 2000.

"This government will continue," she told reporters Friday.

And so will Mrs. Ciller's waiting game.

'Gulf war disease is contagious'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Some medical professionals treating sick Gulf war veterans claim they have contracted symptoms of Gulf war illness and say the mysterious disease could pose a public health threat, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The doctors, nurses and researchers say they are suffering from fatigue, fever, aches, rashes and respiratory problems generally associated with the mysterious syndrome, the newspaper reported.

"Everyone in this office has had Gulf war illness," Garth Nicolson, a biochemist at the non-profit Institute for Molecular Medicine, told the paper. "I lost four teeth and had part of my lower jaw removed."

Mr. Nicolson has claimed to have found a genetically altered version of mycoplasma, a microorganism known to sometimes cause disease, in the blood of half of the several hundred sick veterans he has tested.

Government investigators express scepticism, and say they have found little evidence to support the claim that Gulf war illnesses are contagious.

In its final report two months ago, the presidential advisory committee on Gulf war veterans' illnesses discounted Mr. Nicolson's theories. But doctors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center recently agreed to work with Mr. Nicolson, and the

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee has vowed to investigate the matter.

Charles Hinshaw of Wichita, Kansas, a former president of the American Academy of Environmental Medicine, said he had not become sick treating Gulf war veterans, but he believes that many of their illnesses are contagious.

"If I was running the Red Cross or I was part of the Department of Defence, I'd say, 'let's don't take any more blood from veterans until we answer this question'," Dr. Hinshaw said.

Officials at the American Red Cross, which collects 50 per cent of the nation's blood supply, dismiss such concerns.

"We make sure before we collect blood from anybody ... that they're in good health, and have normal temperature and pulse," said Peter Page, senior medical officer for biomedical services at the American Red Cross.

But Mr. Nicolson said mycoplasma and other bacteria have long incubation periods.

More than five years after the war's end, "we're just now beginning to see second-hand exposures in physicians and nurses," said Mr. Nicolson, adding: "This is not going to go away, just slowly spread."

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:05The Muppet Show
14:30 Cartoon — Adventures of the Rainbow Pond
15:00French Programmes
15:00America's Funniest People
16:25Escape from Jupiter
16:50Doc — Challenge
17:15Border Town
18:00French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00The Fifth Estate
20:30Challenges
21:10 Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00News in English
22:25Cobra
23:00Hart to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:30Fajr
05:47(Sunrise)Dhuha
11:45Dhuhr
15:08Asr
17:44Maghreb
19:01Isha

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St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifich, Tel. 810740
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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

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King postpones Denmark visit

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein has postponed a visit to Denmark after undergoing prostate surgery in the United States, palace officials said Thursday.

The Monarch has been advised by doctors to rest for four weeks, subsequent to a successful one-hour operation Saturday in the midwestern state of Minnesota.

King Hussein has not fixed another date for his visit to Denmark, which was to have taken place from April 22 to 25.

During a meeting with a group of Jordanian journalists on April 9, Queen Margrethe II had expressed "great pleasure" to meet with Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor.

"Most people, who are aware of what

goes on, have a great admiration for His Majesty's moral and physical courage, his position in that area," said the Danish queen. "I have always admired him greatly."

"The official welcome is also a personal welcome from my husband and myself to His Majesty," continued the queen, who described the visit as proof of "understanding and peace between our two peoples."

Last April, Queen Margrethe was supposed to visit Jordan, a visit postponed due to the Israeli bombing of Cana in South Lebanon. "We should have visited last year. We still hope to do it in the near future," the queen concluded.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan Thursday meets with visiting chiefs of Arab judicial institutes (photo by Boghos)

Crown Prince addresses visiting chiefs of Arab judicial institutes

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Thursday met with visiting chiefs of Arab judicial institutes where he lauded the role qualified and competent judges play in Arab societies.

Addressing the justices at the Royal Court, the Crown Prince emphasised the need to upgrade standards to deal with developments and new trends in judicial affairs.

He also maintained the importance of a recent

cooperation agreement between judicial institutes in the Arab World and the Beirut-based Arab Centre for Legal Research and Studies.

The Crown Prince described the accord as transformative of the judges' training - curricula and further stated that it would help create a data base aiding in the development of judicial systems in the Arab World.

Prince Hassan also pro-

moted inter-Arab and global cooperation in judicial affairs.

The head of the Arab Centre for Legal Research and Studies Abdul Halim Sulh thanked the Prince and outlined the recent agreement as aiming to help further coordinate the Arab World's efforts in promoting judicial issues.

Minister of Justice Riyad Shakaa also attended the session.

Palestine Airlines begins operations out of Amman

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The first flight by Palestine Airlines from Jordan was expected to take off from Marka airport on Friday night carrying Palestinian students to Morocco.

Palestinian Ambassador Omar Khanb said that the two Palestinian Fokker-50 aircraft arrived here on Thursday from Egypt for the first time since the Palestine Airlines was launched a year ago.

He told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview that the two jets would transport 82 Palestinian students to Casablanca where they will receive aviation training financed by the Moroccan government.

Mr. Khanb added that the students came by land from the West Bank to travel to Morocco on Friday.

Officials at Marka airport said that the two jets landed at 12:00 noon on Thursday and were piloted by Emad Qiblawi and Nahi Mana'a.

Last year, Palestine Airlines launched its first flight from

the Egyptian airport of Al Arish in the Sinai en route to Saudi Arabia carrying Palestinian pilgrims to Mecca and Medina.

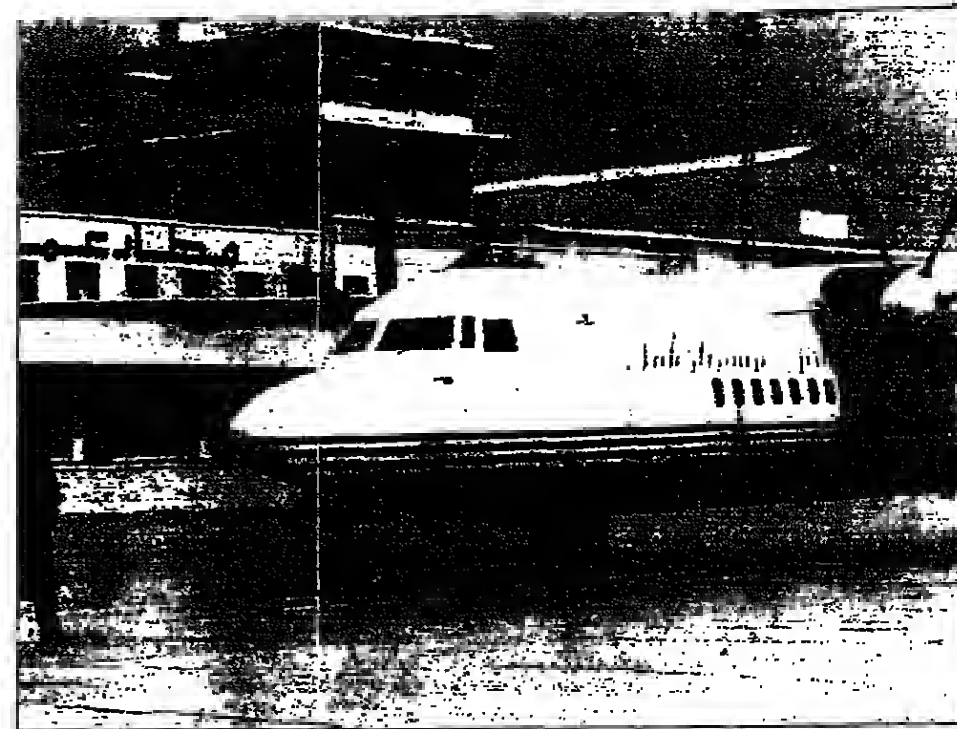
The launching of the airlines was in accordance with a 1993 Palestinian-Israeli accord that granted the Palestinians limited autonomy in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians have been using Egypt's Al Arish airport because Israel has yet to agree to allow Palestinian aircraft to fly to the Dahaniya airport in Gaza.

The Palestinians are opposed to Israeli demands for full control over security at Dahaniya airport. The only aircraft granted landing rights there is President Yasser Arafat's private aircraft.

According to Palestine Civil Aviation Authority Director General Fayez Zeidan, the Moroccan government is financing the Palestinian airlines' instruction.

Jordan Civil Aviation Authority Director General Jaser Ziyad noted that the airline's operation was based on a Jordanian-Palestinian air transport agreements and



Two Fokker-50 Palestinian commercial planes, which landed in Jordan for the first time Thursday, before heading to Morocco (photo by George Kazeziar)

stated that Jordan would offer its services to help the Palestinians and the Palestinian National Authority in this field.

Mr. Zeidan travelled on the

planes, arriving from Cairo, and expressed appreciation to Jordan for its support of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Zeidan expressed the pride

of the Palestinian people in launching this first flight to Jordan which, they said, marks the beginning of close bilateral cooperation in civil aviation.

Ministry of Supply to open 'farmers markets'

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Supply Friday announced that it will open marketplaces in which farmers can sell their produce directly to the public.

However, it did not specify a date as to the inauguration of these marketplaces.

According to ministry statement, these open markets will be first organised within the Amman Municipality which will provide basic services to the farmers who will be assigned special zones to sell their products.

This move came in response to public confusion regarding fruit and vegetable prices following the flooding of such.

Farmers will be required to pay nominal fees for municipal services, and the Ministry of Supply, acting in conjunction with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment, will supervise the process to ensure that product sales will, indeed, be a direct transaction and that the new

arrangement will serve the interests of farmers and consumers alike, the statement said.

This will secure a higher income for farmers, who will not have to pay a middle party, and secure reasonable prices for consumers, it added.

The ministry statement requested that farmers take advantage of this opportunity to improve their income and ensure that their products are sold for reasonable prices.

Through an arrangement with the Amman Municipality, the ministry will allow farmers to sell their products in zones to be located adjacent to the wholesale central marketplace in eastern Amman.

The statement was issued following a meeting chaired by Minister of Supply Hani Mulki and attended by senior ministry officials and the director of the central market to discuss prices and ways to help farmers better benefit from their labour while guaranteeing reasonable prices for consumers.

Former Sri Lankan consul released on JD 20,000 bail

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Former Honorary Consul for Sri Lanka, Tawfiq Abu Khajil, currently facing trial for the alleged sale of habes of Sri Lankan nationals, has been freed on JD 20,000 bail, lawyers said Thursday.

Defence Attorney Ahmad Tbeishat said that the Court of Appeals accepted his request and revoked two recent Criminal Court rulings to keep his client detained.

In January, the Criminal Court resolved, to release the former honorary consul on a JD 100,000 bail due to health problems. However, the following week, the Court of Appeals ordered him re-detained.

In addition to the charge of infant trafficking (illegal under a 1928 law prohibit-

ing slavery), Mr. Abu Khajil faces several other charges including forgery of documents and official seals, and illegal possession of firearms and wireless devices.

Repeated bids to free Mr. Abu Khajil, who has been imprisoned for almost 13 months, on bail have been rejected by the court more than 25 times, according to Attorney Tbeishat.

Two other women are being tried on the same charges. They are Andrea Bustani, Mr. Abu Khajil's secretary, who is being tried in absentia, and a Sri Lankan citizen, Anourma G.L., who is accused of selling her baby.

Mr. Abu Khajil was to be sentenced in March, but the Amman Criminal Court postponed his case twice for further revision.

The same court is expect-

ed to either issue a verdict on April 22, or postpone the case for further examination.

Mr. Abu Khajil was detained by authorities, shortly after airport police stopped a Dutch couple, who were leaving the country with a child they considered to have adopted.

They were found to be in possession of forged documents.

In a separate case, Mr. Abu Khajil is on trial at the Criminal Court, on charges of raping four Sri Lankan women.

However, the four women changed their court testimonies, and have been transferred to the criminal prosecutor on perjury charges.

Roundtable participants adopt set of recommendations

AMMAN (J.T.) — Participants in a three-day international roundtable entitled "Equal Opportunities: A Question of Rights and Humanity" Thursday concluded their meetings and adopted a set of recommendations designed to advance the status of woman.

Participants described equality between men and women as a basic human right, provided for in the various constitutions of the participating countries.

They called for incorporating this right in actual legislation.

The articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ensure equality between men and women, and conference participants urged the countries which have not heretofore ratified the convention to do so immediately.

To enhance women's par-

ticipation in political life, the conferees called for increasing women's political awareness through education.

They stressed the need for increasing women's participation in Parliament, and for enabling them to assume senior positions in decision-making.

Participants also suggested the introduction of education in the school curricula to promote awareness of women's rights.

They stressed the media's role in promoting women's rights and in changing attitudes towards women, as well as in eliminating the traditional negative stereotypes.

Participants also recommended that women's organisations maintain closer cooperation and coordination to influence policies and strategies on women-related issues.

Participants to the round-

table, organised by the Jordan National Committee for Women (JNCW) in cooperation with the International Movement for Rights and Humanity, have discussed several reports on the social and human rights of women, ensuring and enhancing gender equality through developing and revising legislation, increasing women's participation in political life and changing negative attitudes towards women.

They also reviewed the experiences of some of the participating countries in enhancing women's participation in political and social life.

Participating in the conference, financed by the British Overseas Development Agency, were several intellectuals, experts, human rights advocates, and representatives of studies and research centres in 17 countries.

Arab American displays heritage through his art

By Jeffrey Buckley
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a gallery among the gardeo terraces of Jabal Weibdeh's Darat Al Funun, Arab-American artist, Said Nuseibeh, is displaying a collection of 40 of his photographic works, depicting the Islamic architecture of Jerusalem.

The golden cupped Dome of the Rock, built in the year 692 by Abdul Malik Ben Marwan, takes centre stage in this exhibit as the artist reveals many angles of the exterior as well as the rarely photographed mosque interior.

"The Dome of the Rock reached out and pulled me closer — it captured me," the artist said in an interview with the Jordan Times Thursday.

It is a building of peace, he maintained, and pointed out as to how its architect harmonised Hellenist, Byzantine and Sufic styles to create the structure.

"The role of an artist is to encourage the aesthetic in spite of politics," Mr. Nuseibeh argued in reference to the modern-day controversy surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem.

He emphasised the importance of beauty and how easily it is overlooked as today's media regularly focuses on violence and hatred. "The newspapers don't talk about the spiritual aspect," he said.

Mr. Nuseibeh did not claim to be free of political intent, however. "It's important for my community to have a voice," he asserted.

His political message, a call for the world to understand his community through art, is peaceful.

"What I do has nothing to do with violence," he said. "My job as an artist is to nurture."

Mr. Nuseibeh explained that he sometimes takes hours setting up and waiting for proper lighting before placing an image on film.

As a pacifist, the artist said he doesn't "shoot" photos but "creates" them. He maintained that shooting can only describe a violent act. "I want to change the English language,"

Mr. Nuseibeh expressed a desire for his people to have a mode of communication through popular art. He combines the ancient cultural tradition of Islamic architecture with the modern medium of photography.

"Architecture is human — it is stone and glass and steel and structure but it is [also] necessarily a reflection of the humanity that created it," he explains. The care involved in Mr. Nuseibeh's photographs of the Dome of the Rock demonstrates this humanity as well.

Mr. Nuseibeh is accredited with the first complete photographic layout of the holy site — a project co-sponsored by the Palestine Welfare Association of Geneva and the Institute for Advanced Study of Princeton.

Out of his home studio in San Francisco, the forty-year old artist works with practising architects of the Bay Area but said he would welcome any further opportunity to venture to the land where his heritage lies to complete more such projects here.

Since age 13 he has loved photography, naming Ruth Bernhard, of the West Coast school, as one of his main influences.

He has spent time perfecting his devotion on and off in the past twenty years in Arab Jerusalem, combining his art with the art of his ancestors.

The photographs of the current exhibit as well as many others can be seen in the artist's book, "The Dome of the Rock."

Mr. Nuseibeh's exhibit at Darat al Funun on Jabal Weibdeh will continue until May 8.

What's Going On

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of products, for adults and children in celebration of Eid Al Adha, by Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NAF) at the NAF premises, off Wadi Saqra (Tel. 699141/2), until April 16.

* Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Paintings by Vian Shamounki at the Jordan Plastic Art Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 25 (Tel. 623297).

* Paintings by Yassin Al Mohammadani at the Orient Gallery, Sbmeisani (Tel. 681303/4), until April 28.

* Paintings by Patricia Châtelain at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 27.

IAF calls for foreign and domestic monitors in parliamentary elections

By Khalil Shnbaki
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) has called on the government to allow Jordanian, Arab and foreign observers to monitor forthcoming parliamentary elections, due to be held in November this year.

IAF Secretary General Isahq Farhan maintained that electoral integrity hinges on guarantees provided by the government, including the issuance of a magnetic election identity card which would contain a national registration number.

He also requested the allocation of specific polling and vote-counting centres to avoid election rigging, which, he said, might happen during the process of moving ballot boxes.

Dr. Farhan stressed that the IAF does not contest the integrity of Abdul Salam Majali's government. However, he maintained "imbalances" in the 1993 elections during Dr. Majali's tenure.

The IAF has stated that it will participate in elections at the end of this month following a meeting of the IAF Consultation Council.

Special committees have been formed and are preparing for the elections, Dr.

Farhan added.

He eliminated the possibility of joining with leftist or nationalist groups, citing the one-person, one-vote system, which he deemed "uncivilised and unconstitutional", as justification for not doing so. However, he added, the IAF will support nationalist candidates in districts where there are no IAF candidates.

Dr. Farhan accused current and previous governments of obstructing efforts to correct imbalances in administrative divisions and suggested that three seats be allocated to each district.

He suggested increasing seats in the Lower House of Parliament to 100 in fairness to the governorates of Amman and Zarqa.

Jordanian opposition parties Thursday sent a memorandum to Dr. Majali in which they requested that the government respect human rights and called on the government not to interfere in public freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

According to an article in the Arabic daily Al Ra'i, they stated that doing so would enhance Jordan's democratic experience.

They also requested that the government deal with political parties as national institu-

tions and cease harassment of party members, according to Al Ra'i.

These parties also criticised the present interim election law, which has been in force for 8 years, saying that it is time to approve a standing election law, allowing people to elect their representatives. "This can only be achieved through a national dialogue between various categories of people, including civil institutions, public servants, intellectuals, thinkers, writers and journalists."

They also criticised the one-person, one-vote system, maintaining that "it helps the government to form the House of its wishes."

These parties also requested that the government enhance ties with other Arab countries, particularly Syria and Iraq, while severing political and economic ties with Israel, Al Ra'i reported.

The memo was signed by IAF representatives, as well as the Baath Progressive Party, the Jordan Communist Party, the National Action Front, the Jordan Arab Ansar Party, the Jordan Unionist Democratic Party, the Jordan Socialist Baath Party, the People's Democratic Party, the Jordan Arab Constitutional Party and the National Labour Party.

Men arrested for uncle's stoning death

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police announced that they have arrested two brothers suspected of stoning their 60-year-old uncle to death in the Amman National Park, official sources said.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the two brothers, identified only as Abdullah A., 41, and Fouad, 27, confessed Wednesday to stoning their uncle, Abdullah Mohammad, over a feud regarding property ownership.

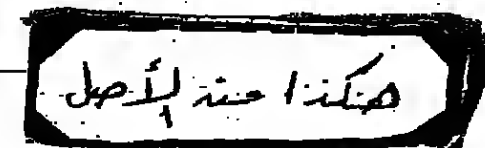
The source stated that on Tuesday, the

three men beaded to the park, located next to Queen Alia International Airport Highway, and began to argue about ownership of land and horses.

"The argument became heated and turned into a fight," the source told the Jordan Times. "The two brothers stoned him to death."

An autopsy performed on Mr. Mohammad indicated that he died from internal bleeding and a skull fracture.

Police are investigating the incident.



Rebellion spreads in southern Albania amid political impasse

TIRANA (AFP) — The insurrection in southern Albania spread Tuesday with at least three more towns set to fall into rebel hands while the government and opposition sought a joint solution out of the crisis.

Local television said rioters had captured three military barracks late Monday near Gramsh, about 100 kilometres south of the capital, but the town, which has a weapons factory, had not yet fallen into rebel hands.

The towns of Fieri, Lushnja and Ardenica were also threatened although the situation was reported to be calm in all three Tuesday.

In Gjirokastra, looters for the first time attacked government buildings, including the hospital. Witnesses reached by phone from Athens said hooded men stole large amounts of medicine from the hospital, which had recently received an aid shipment from Greece.

The witnesses said the looters then went to an old age home where they took blankets, beds, clothes and food, before moving on to the hotels, where they seized food and all the linen.

The rebel advances, which have left them in control of nearly one fourth of the

country, come as President Sali Berisha struggles to patch up relations with the opposition.

But some observers said his move may be too late in the day as even the opposition appears to have little influence on the rioters whose anti-government protests in January against failed investment schemes quickly escalated into a full-blown armed rebellion.

At least 40 people have been killed in the last week. In Vlore, the southern port from where the insurrection snowballed, one resident told AFP Tuesday that people would not surrender the weapons they had stolen from army barracks as long as Mr. Berisha remained in power and as long as they were not reimbursed for the money they lost in the failed Pyramid schemes.

"They will not surrender their weapons as long as the government has not answered to their political and economic demands," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But Mr. Berisha, who declared a state of emergency last week, has steadfastly refused to resign and is unlikely to reimburse those bilked by the fraudulent schemes as his govern-

ment is broke.

He was to meet again with the opposition Tuesday in a bid to reach agreement on a candidate for the premiership, the head of the Social Democratic Party said.

Social Democratic Party leader Skender Gjinushi said Mr. Berisha and the opposition have been unable to reach compromise on a neutral candidate who is not implicated in the social crisis.

A similar meeting between the two sides Monday ended overnight without any agreement.

Mr. Berisha at the weekend buckled under weeks of local and international pressure to forge a deal with the opposition to end the uprising that threatens to engulf the country in civil war.

He agreed to share out ministry posts with the opposition but the rebels said that while they welcomed the move they still wanted him to step down.

One rebel group in the southern flashpoint town of Vlore pledged "to ensure public order with a phased return to administrative normality."

Their pledge was signed at a meeting with the Italian ambassador to Tirana and guaranteed in return inter-

national aid, the Italian News Agency ANSA reported in Rome.

The agreement also called for guarantees that Mr. Berisha's climbdown he implemented "properly, rapidly and peacefully."

In Strasbourg, France, The Council of Europe, which safeguards democracy and human rights, urged Albanians Tuesday to hand over arms and weapons without delay.

Finnish Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen, who chairs the 40-member council's committee of ministers, welcomed the agreement reached between Albanian President Sali Berisha and political parties.

"The Council of Europe joins in the urgent appeal to all Albanians to abandon violence and to hand over arms and weapons without delay, so as to allow the rule of law to prevail and democracy to function," Ms. Halonen said in a statement.

"The Council of Europe is ready to go ahead with its assistance programmes for Albania, adapting them to the important tasks ahead concerning the future constitution, the elections and improvements in the field of justice and law enforcement," she said.



A group of Albanians cover their ears while a man (centre) fires off several rounds from a rifle taken from the army barracks in Berat, Albania's revolt spread through most of the south of the country Monday, as the army pulled back in disarray and rebels ignored a political deal thrashed out by President Sali Berisha and the opposition (Reuters photo)

Colombian court rules in disputed treasure case

BOGOTA (R) — A court has ruled that 50 per cent of a multibillion-dollar treasure that sank aboard a Spanish galleon off Colombia's coast in 1708 belongs to the U.S. company that discovered it, the company's lawyer said Monday.

The lawyer, Danilo Devís, said the company would appeal the ruling handed down Friday by a Superior Court judge in the Caribbean port city of Barranquilla, however, on grounds that most or all of the treasure scattered across the sea floor was in an area just outside Colombia's 19 kilometres territorial limit.

International Law of the Sea stipulates that a country can only lay claim to natural resources, such as oil, found within its 321 kilometres exclusive economic zone, Mr. Devís told Reuters.

"Treasure logically is not a natural resource," he added, saying Cayman Islands-based Sea Search Armada would continue insisting that it is the rightful owner of 100 per cent of the treasure.

The Colombian government, which has also announced plans to appeal Friday's ruling, argues that only 5 per cent of the treasure should go to Sea Search Armada, Mr. Devís said.

Friday's ruling was the third to be handed down in the case of the San Jose, which sank in a battle with the English navy off Cartagena 289 years ago.

The Barranquilla court, adhering to a previous ruling handed down in July 1994, said the treasure should be the target of a 50-50 split, regardless of whether it lay inside or outside the 12-mile limit.

Mr. Devís said the treasure, mostly gold and precious stones valued at anywhere between \$3 billion and \$10 billion, sits nearly 280 metres below the surface in an area off Colombia's Islas Del Rosario islands.

In a possible Catch 22 situation, which could ultimately prevent Sea Search Armada from recovering the treasure, he noted that much of it had long since been locked under coral reefs and that it would require operations of surgical precision to remove it without harming the coral.

Sea Search Armada was founded by 100 investors, each of whom put up \$100,000 in initial financing to comb the treasure-filled waters of the Caribbean, according to Mr. Devís. He said the late U.S. actor Michael Landon was among founding members of the company, which has been suing to win control over the San Jose loot since 1989.

U.N. Afghan envoy vices optimism for release of French aid workers

KABUL (AFP) — United Nations Afghan envoy Norbert Holl Tuesday expressed optimism for the safe release of the two French aid workers imprisoned by the Taliban in Kabul.

"Not in terms of hours or days, no," said Mr. Holl, head of the U.N. Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNISMA), after meeting the Taliban authorities and visiting the prisoners.

Mr. Holl raised the issue of the release of the two Frenchmen during a morning meeting with Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, leader of the Taliban's ruling council in Kabul.

"I was promised that they will deal with it in the near future," Mr. Holl added.

"And I have the feeling that they will do it in the spirit of clemency," the U.N. envoy elaborated.

Mr. Holl said the purpose of his one-day visit to Kabul was not specifically to seek the release of the Frenchmen. He had already raised the issue during an earlier visit to the Taliban headquarters in the southern provincial capital Kandahar, he added.

Mr. Holl visited the downtown Sedarat prison where

the two Frenchmen from the humanitarian relief agency Action Contre La Faim (ACF) have been held for the past 18 days on charges of violating shariat or Islamic law.

He said the two ACF workers, Frederic Miellet and Jose Daniel Llorente, were "in remarkably good shape" and the U.N. envoy promised to telephone their families with news of his visit.

"I told them not only the French government was very keen on getting them free but also the U.N., particularly the Security Council," Mr. Holl added.

Mr. Holl was given the red carpet treatment at Sedarat prison; a magenta coloured Afghan rug had been specially laid on the cell floor for his visit.

Mr. Michel and Mr. Llorente have been well looked after by the Taliban, who allow regular visits from the expatriate community in Kabul, who are free to bring gifts of food and books.

Their "cell" is a second-storey office, admittedly with bars on the single window but the rickety wooden door is seldom locked and they may use the toilet in the corridor.

The Taliban gave Mr. Holl no exact date when the two Frenchmen might be released, even if they gave the impression of adopting a softer posture regarding the alleged violations.

"I do not feel discouraged," Mr. Holl said guardedly. The two ACF workers were arrested by the Taliban on six charges of violating Shariat, which now stand at illegal mixing with Afghan women.

The two Frenchmen were arrested during a farewell lunch for three expatriate aid workers, which was attended by 60 Afghan women employee guests. The men were in the same compound but separate buildings at the time.

The ultra-fundamentalist Taliban who captured Kabul Sept. 27, 1997, have imposed a strictly enforced version of Shariat on the two-thirds of Afghanistan that they now control.

The Taliban are particularly sensitive that Afghan women should lead segregated and secluded lives, which is why the case of the two Frenchmen — initially charged with coveting with "half-naked" Afghan women — excited so much furore.

CIA agent expelled by Germany was working on third country

WASHINGTON (R) — The CIA officer who was recently ordered out of Germany was collecting information on a third country, probably Iran, the Washington Post reported in Tuesday editions, quoting U.S. intelligence sources.

The German magazine Spiegel said Monday that the American diplomat had been caught trying to recruit senior officials from Bonn's Economics Ministry and trying to obtain information on what it called "high-tech projects."

But U.S. sources told the

Post the agent was expelled to emphasise a new demand that it be kept informed of Central Intelligence Agency operations inside its borders, not because of anger that Washington was gathering economic intelligence.

One administration source told the newspaper the target of the agent's work was not Germany, but "a third country."

Other intelligence sources said the CIA had actively used Germany over the years to carry out operations against Libya and Iran.

The newspaper quoted a U.S. State Department official as saying the event would not spoil relations between Germany and the United States, although the official added that the matter was not settled yet.

The Post said CIA officials in Washington were puzzled as to why the CIA officer was selected since his activities were open and not clandestine.

"This put the CIA on notice that the Germans want more progress," one source told the paper.

Mine blast kills 89 in Central China

BEIJING (AFP) — An explosion that ripped through a private coal mine in Central China has killed 89 people dead and another nine injured, in one of the country's worst-ever mining disasters, local officials said Tuesday.

The March 4 blast at a mine in Henan province's Lushan county prompted the provincial government to announce a major crackdown, aimed at closing down all unlicensed or unsafe mines by mid-April.

It was the worst mining accident in Henan's history. As an initial response, all 100 mines in Lushan have been closed temporarily pending the results of an investigation into the causes of the disaster, said Yuan Zhoukan of the county's emergency services.

The three owners of the mine have been detained following the explosion, Mr. Yuan told AFP by telephone. A report in Hong

Kong earlier said the owners had fled, fearing reprisals.

"There was a single explosion in one of the three small tunnels within the mine, but two other tunnels immediately collapsed as well," Mr. Yuan said.

The initial death toll had been 86, but three more miners had died of their injuries, he added.

The disaster was the latest in a long series of large-scale mining accidents across China, most of them at small, private mines — many of them unlicensed — that completely ignore state safety regulations.

A circular issued immediately by the provincial government in Zhengzhou, ordered a survey of every single mine in the province, with all unregistered operations to be closed down by March 15.

Mines that possess valid licences, but are found to violate safety regulations,

most be closed by April 15. "No stone must be left unturned," the circular said, warning all mine owners that they would be held responsible for any accidents resulting from safety shortcuts.

"We must not allow safety to be sacrificed on the altar of profit," it said, adding that licensing authorities who authorise mines without checking their safety standards would also be punished.

Meanwhile, Henan Vice-Governor Li Zhibin warned that no attempt should be made to cover up accidents. "Those who are found to have hidden the facts, or those trying to flee their responsibilities, will be severely punished," Mr. Li was quoted as saying by the Henan Daily.

In January, 31 people were killed and four seriously injured in an explosion in a coal mine near Yima, also in Henan, while

in November, 114 people were killed in a coal mine explosion in the northern province of Shanxi.

Industrial accidents in China claimed more than 18,000 lives in 1995, with the mining industry accounting for most deaths.

In the first eight months of 1996, some 7,610 people were killed in 5,411 separate mining accidents.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Labour last year, the alarming death toll was largely the result of a flouting of security procedures and a lack of government action against illegal mines.

In fact, the number of fatalities is probably far higher than the official toll because "some mine owners... even tried to hide accidents from the authorities," the report said, adding that around 25 per cent of accidents took place at unlicensed mines.

jailed general should dispel any doubts about the decision to certify Mexico.

"We think it's a highly significant appointment which ought to be welcomed by the detractors of our president's policy," Mr. Burns said. "We have absolute trust and confidence in President Zedillo... He has chosen this man personally."

Mr. Burns hoped the announcement "will convince those in Congress and those around the country... that President Zedillo's commitment to wage the war against narcotics is genuine."

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the appointment of Mr. Herran Salvati to succeed the

U.S. strongly backs new Mexican drug czar

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States Monday threw its support behind Mexico's new anti-drug czar and said the appointment strengthened President Bill Clinton's case for certifying Mexico as an ally in the war on drugs.

Mr. Clinton defended his Feb. 28 decision to certify Mexico and vowed to convince the U.S. Congress to back his position.

President Ernesto Zedillo named Mariano Herran Salvati, a little known lawyer, to head Mexico's anti-narcotics effort. He replaces Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo.

lu, who was abruptly jailed on charges he was in the pay of Mexico's top drug lord.

His arrest was announced by Mexico on Feb. 13 as Mr. Clinton was weighing whether to recertify Mexico as an ally in the drug war despite claims of corruption and lack of cooperation among Mexican law enforcement agencies.

The scandal caused an uproar in Washington, where members of Congress said it showed how far traffickers had penetrated the Mexican government. A U.S. House of Representatives committee voted last

week to overturn Mr. Clinton's certification finding and the full house is to vote later this week.

"I'm going to do my best to persuade the Congress that we're right," Mr. Clinton said at a joint White House news conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Mr. Clinton said he believed the Mexican government was cooperating, noting the arrest of Gen. Gutierrez Rebollo.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the appointment of Mr. Herran Salvati to succeed the

Juppe bids to boost women in French politics

PARIS (AFP) — Prime Minister Alain Juppe was to propose amending the French constitution Tuesday to boost women's role in politics, in particular to counter France's lamentably low proportion of female MPs, officials said.

The French premier was to outline draft legislation in an unprecedented debate in the National Assembly expected to focus notably on the controversial option of introducing quotas for women MPs.

The move by Mr. Juppe is seen by some observers as a blatant bid to woo the female vote ahead of legislative elections next spring.

Government spokesman Alain Lamassoure confirmed that Mr. Juppe was "determined to go as far as possible" in reforming political structures to encourage more women to run for office.

"After all the words and ideas, we must take action,"

Mr. Juppe told a cabinet meeting, according to Lamassoure.

Mr. Juppe met with members of a government commission on male-female parity last week and told them he would outline in the debate a series of voluntary measures to boost the number of women in French political life.

France rates lamentably low in world terms for including women in political life with currently only two female ministers and two secretaries of state in the 32-strong government.

That represents just 12.5 per cent, one of the lowest levels in the 15-strong European Union way behind the 50 per cent of front-running Sweden. In a European league table it comes 21st, behind Turkey.

Out of 577 deputies in the National Assembly, there are only 32 women, 5.5 per cent of the total, again much lower than in other EU

countries. On a local level, only five per cent of France's 36,000 mayors are women.

But in a country with France's reputation, the debate on sexual equality has, perhaps understandably, taken a long time to mature.

The Socialists, who are hoping that next spring's legislative ballots will reverse their routing in 1993 elections, were first off the mark in the current upsurge of discussion of female-oriented reform.

They vowed to introduce a quota system to make women at least a third of Socialist candidates in next spring's ballots. A list of 167 constituencies — out of 555 nationwide — reserved for women has been drawn up.

Mr. Juppe's rightwing government was initially scornful of the Socialists' move. Jean-Francois Manel, secretary-general of Mr. Juppe's Gaullist Rally for

the Republic (RPR) Party, accused them of "sending women kamikaze-like to the front line in constituencies where no-one on the left wants them."

But 12 months away from an election, and amid record low poll ratings, Mr. Juppe has been forced to act, cynics say.

The idea of quotas continues to fuel controversy, even among the Socialists who have agreed to it.

According to a poll published in the daily Le Monde, 60 per cent of MPs are against quotas — including 22 of the 32 female deputies in the National Assembly.

Socialist Mayor Yvette Roudy said: "Even in the Socialist Party, which is making an effort, if they are beaten in the legislative elections, some people will blame it on the women candidates."

Ramos bans showing of Filipina maid's life story

MANILA (AFP) — Philippine President Fidel Ramos Tuesday banned a movie on Filipina maid Sarah Balabagan's ordeal in the United Arab Emirates, saying it could upset ties between Manila and Abu Dhabi, officials said.

The film tells the life story of 19-year-old Balabagan, a Filipino Muslim girl who was saved by a royal pardon from a firing squad in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where she was convicted for the 1994 stabbing death of her Arab employer whom she said had attempted to rape her.

Presidential Executive Secretary Ruben Torres said he received a fax from Mr. Ramos, who is currently visiting Bahrain, ordering him to "take all the necessary actions to defer the public showing of the said movie due to anticipated extremely negative impact" on bilateral ties.

He said it could also lead to "risk of failure in negotiations to save John Aquino," a Filipino who has appealed his death sentence before the UAE Supreme Court for

the killing of an Indian fellow worker, and other Filipinos hoping for clemency.

The ban coincided with a temporary restraining order issued by a lower court Tuesday. The temporary ban would be in effect pending a court ruling on the petition of a Muslim group who said the movie offended their Islamic faith.

The movie, produced by Viva Films, was scheduled to be shown in Manila theatres Wednesday. The producers were not available for comment.

Foreign Department Undersecretary Leonides Caday, who had seen the film, said in a report to Mr. Ramos that the movie portrayed the UAE judicial system "in a bad light."

Mr. Caday also described the scene where Ms. Balabagan was given 100 lashes as "exaggerated" because it showed a burly male jailguard hitting Sarah with a large stick.

"Ordinarily, if the inmate is female, a female guard will do the flogging," Mr. Caday said.

Zaire rebels say they are close to Kisangani

GOMA, Zaire (R) — Zairean rebels have advanced to within 10 kilometres of the northeastern city of Kisangani, rebel radio said Tuesday.

There was no independent confirmation of the rebel claim to be so close to Kisangani.

The Voice of the People, broadcasting in the eastern border town of Goma, also said that the southeastern lake port of Moba, 750 kilometres to the south in the copper and cobalt mining Shaba region, had been captured Sunday.

The radio said the fall of Kisangani, the base for an ineffective mercenary-backed government counter-offensive, was imminent and repeated a March 13 deadline for Zaire army soldiers to give up their arms.

"Most of the people have fled Kisangani while soldiers are stealing, raping and killing," the radio said.

The Zairean Defence Ministry says rebels are within 100 kilometres to the north and northeast of the city and within 50 kilometres to the southeast.

Independent sources place the rebels closer in the north, where they report that, using the Lindi River, the rebels were able to take the town of Bengamisa last week and move within 40

kilometres of Kisangani.

One regional military analyst and local military sources said Tutsi-led rebels were massing on the southeastern flank and advancing from the north, but he predicted they might opt to stop and consolidate if they meet stiff opposition.

"The momentum is certainly with the rebels. But they may be forced to stop and consolidate their positions around the city if they meet stiff resistance," he told Reuters.

Government and rebels have attached huge symbolic value to Kisangani. It is strategically placed on the Zaire River, which flows down to the capital Kinshasa. Witnesses say troops have already started stopping and checking all boats heading west.

Regional military analysts say that should Kisangani fall copper-rich Shaba province in the south, and diamond-rich Kasai could follow in a domino effect.

The radio said that in the battle for the Lake Tanganyika port of Moba three fighters loyal to Burundian Hutu rebel Leonard Nyangoma had been captured fighting on the government side.

The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADLF), led by veteran guerrilla

Laurent Kabila, rules at least a sixth of the vast central African state since launching its rebellion in October with a force spearheaded by ethnic Tutsis.

The rebels said Tuesday an eastern town where tens of thousands of Hutu refugees have fled is not a target for their military advance.

Since the weekend Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees have been flooding into Ubundu, 100 kilometres southeast of Kisangani, Zaire's third largest city.

"Ubundu is not a target, we have no intention of attacking refugees and have given the international community every facility to set up a humanitarian corridor that will allow the refugees to go home," said Bizima Karaha, foreign affairs commissar of the ADLF.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman Paul Stromberg said that local staff who visited Ubundu late Monday estimated that at least 75,000 refugees had gathered there on the banks of the Zaire River.

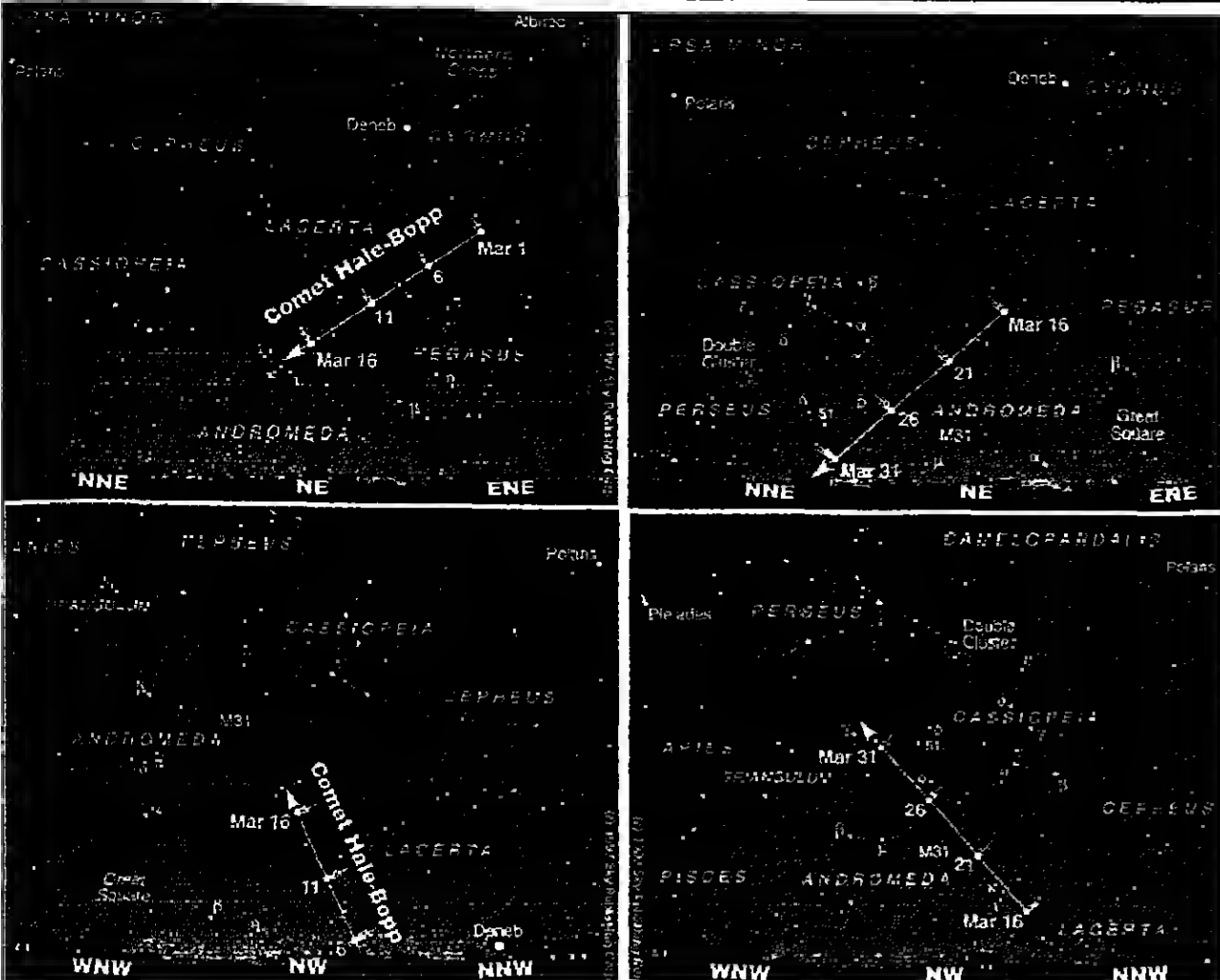
Meanwhile, French President Jacques Chirac Tuesday urged the international community to press for a ceasefire in Zaire and to help scores of thousands of Rwandan refugees stranded by the civil war.

Mr. Chirac, quoted by government spokesman Alain Lamassoure, said France was issuing a "solemn plea to the international community to assume its responsibilities by taking the necessary measures to ensure a halt to the fighting and the implementation of urgently needed humanitarian aid."

The French leader made the statement at the weekly cabinet meeting, which came after mainly Tutsi rebels advancing westwards across Zaire claimed to have seized the last government-held port on Lake Tanganyika.

Diplomatic sources said they believed France wanted the United States in particular to put greater pressure on Mr. Kabila to halt his military offensive. Many Tutsis in the Great Lakes region of central and east Africa are English speakers, while Zaire was formerly a Belgian colony.

During the cabinet meeting in Paris, Secretary of State for Humanitarian Action Xavier Emmanuelli reported on the situation in eastern Zaire, after touring the region where some 400,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees are believed to be holed out and in very poor condition, most of them cut off from aid by the fighting.



Four charts released on March 10 show the best places to look for Comet Hale-Bopp in North America in the March morning sky (early March, top left; late March, top right) and the March evening sky (early March, bottom left; late March, bottom right). The two-tailed comet, already visible to the naked eye in much of the northern hemisphere, could be one of the brightest comets ever, shedding light on how the Earth's oceans formed (Reuters photo)

Comet Hale-Bopp could give clue to Earth's oceans

WASHINGTON (R) — Two-tailed comet Hale-Bopp, already visible to the naked eye in much of the northern hemisphere, could be one of the brightest comets ever, shedding light on how the Earth's oceans formed.

"You can't miss it. It looks like a comet," astronomer Paul Feldman of Johns Hopkins University said Monday after his first non-telescope view of the brilliant white smudge in the pre-dawn northeast sky.

Mr. Feldman said he got up early and looked out over a large rural body of water to see Hale-Bopp, but probably did not have to: He later saw it after the sun rose from the parking lot of a well-lit convenience store.

"This is not a hard object to see," said comet expert Michael Mumma of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in suburban Maryland. "Anybody in any major city in the world, presuming they're not looking directly into a street light, can see this comet."

That is not quite true yet. Viewers in Australia and extreme southern South America will not get a good look until after April 1.

But in the northern hemisphere, this week should be prime viewing time because the predawn sky will be moonless until March 19 and the comet will also be visible in the early evening sky. At this point, Hale-Bopp never sets at some northern latitudes, including Alaska and Scandinavia.

Hale-Bopp is already brighter than comet Hyakutake, which streaked across the sky a year ago, according to Sky Telescope, an astronomy magazine that operates a hotline and website for late-breaking celestial news.

The comet's gassy tail takes up 20 degrees of the sky, Sky Telescope said, which is about twice the size of a human fist held at arm's length and viewed against the heavens.

Hale-Bopp has another tail as well, a curved, shorter smudge made up of dust.

What is not visible to unaided eyes on Earth is Hale-Bopp's icy heart, a 40.23 kilometres wide core more than 10 times the size of the average comet and four times the size of the storied Halley's comet.

Unlike Hyakutake, a much smaller, dimmer comet that gave a great show because it came within 14.48 million kilometres of earth, Hale-Bopp will not get any closer than 196.3 million kilometres at its closest pass, on March 23-24.

Hale-Bopp — the name comes from its discoverers, Alan Hale and Thomas Bopp, who first spotted it in 1995 — has the potential to give clues to the earliest moments of the solar system, Mr. Feldman said by telephone.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is launching a series of so-called sounding rockets that will rise above Earth's atmosphere to gauge the composition of the comet and then parachute back down, Mr. Feldman said.

It could help confirm what many scientists already believe: That water on Earth came from comets that hit Earth's surface. The comets' frozen core melted to form oceans, according to the theory.

If the rocket data show the same trace elements present in the world's oceans are also present in Hale-Bopp, this could go a long way toward proving the theory, Mr. Mumma said by telephone.

Earth-based telescopes can get some great views of Hale-Bopp, but the Hubble space telescope will not. The comet's path brings it too close to the sun and Hubble's mechanisms are not equipped to "look" directly into the sun.

Mongolian soldiers starving on Russian border

ULAN BATOR (AFP) — Soldiers stationed in Mongolia's hinterlands are threatened by starvation, due to a lack of rations and inadequate medical support, a report said Tuesday.

Their plight came to light when 32 soldiers serving in Sukh Bator province on the border with Russia had to be flown to Ulan Bator early last month suffering from severe malnutrition and weight loss and close to death.

According to the weekly

Ulan Bator Post, the director of the capital's army hospital, Ayusub, described the men's condition as "like pictures I've seen of those who survived World War II concentration camps."

All but two of the soldiers are still too ill to be released from hospital, the newspaper said, adding that some had reportedly lost 60 per cent of their body weight.

"There are many soldiers still based in Sukh Bator who are starving," Mr. Ayusub said, adding: "I can't

imagine how they are supposed to protect our national borders in this state."

According to the soldiers, almost no preparations had been made for supplying adequate rations to their barracks during the winter, during most of which they lived almost entirely on cabbage soup.

Already serious health problems were exacerbated by an outbreak of dysentery in the barracks, and the soldiers own military doctors have been accused of fail-

ing to treat their charges. "Essential time was lost," Mr. Ayusub said, adding that a new group of doctors had been sent to Sukh Bator to monitor the condition of the remaining soldiers.

According to the newspaper, soldiers have come forward in the past to complain about lack of food and fuel, but the army argues they have insufficient funds to provide for those doing their one year's military service.

Spanish jail psychologist killed in ETA attack

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain (R) — A Spanish prison psychologist was shot three times in the head and killed in an attack apparently by ETA separatist rebels in the Basque city of San Sebastian Tuesday, officials said.

Javier Garcia Elosegui, 37, died shortly after being taken to hospital after the

8.15 a.m. (0715 GMT) attack.

Basque police detained one of the two hooded attackers, a member of an ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom) command, according to the Interior Ministry, and seized his pistol.

The other attacker, a woman, fled the scene — a

street corner in the centre of the northern resort city.

ETA, which has killed some 800 people since starting a Basque independence drive in 1963, kidnapped another prison worker more than a year ago and has been holding him to try to pressure the government into changing its prison policy.

The guerrillas have stepped up their violent activity since the start of the year, killing six people including a supreme court judge.

Police in San Sebastian said they were interrogating the man, who was identified as Pedro Elejalde.

World health body warns against human cloning

GENEVA (Agencies) — The World Health Organisation (WHO) Tuesday called the cloning of human beings ethically "unacceptable" but said opposition to the science should not lead to an indiscriminate ban on all replication procedures.

"WHO considers the use of cloning for the replication of human individuals to be ethically unacceptable as it would violate some of the basic principles which govern medically assisted procreation," WHO Director-General Hiroshi Nakajima said in a statement.

"These include respect for the dignity of the human being and protection of the security of human genetic material." The statement is the first issued by the WHO following the successful cloning of the sheep Dolly in a Scottish laboratory, a development that has rocked the global scientific community.

Dolly, a seven-month-old sheep created from a single cell of a ewe's mammary gland, is the world's first adult animal clone.

The WHO said a special scientific group would review the issue of cloning at its next meeting on April 23 to 25. Mr. Nakajima vetoed an "indiscriminate ban on all cloning procedures and research," saying the cloning of human cell lines "is a routine procedure" that aided diagnosis and research into diseases such as cancer.

"Animal cloning also offers opportunities to advance biomedical research on diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting human beings."

Urging scientists to be cautious in their research, the WHO said it planned to take the lead in organising a broad debate on the subject.

"Our objective would be to help assess current needs and practices, to review available techniques and procedures, and to help build consensus on the technical and ethical safeguards to be applied," Mr. Nakajima said.

The first of the consultations will take place at the beginning of April in Bangkok, Mr. Nakajima said. A WHO group that reviewed technical aspects of medically-assisted procreation in 1992 concluded that everyone had a right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.

But it stressed that "there is a universal consensus on the need to prohibit extreme forms of experimentation," such as human cloning and interspecies fertilisation.

In London, delegates to a biotechnology conference agreed Monday consumers are frightened about genetics technology because they are being kept in the dark about developments until they hit the marketplace.

Ministers who addressed the conference agreed that Britain's extensive system of review committees which examines issues of biotechnology and genetic engineering was not enough to ease public fears about cloning and genetically engineered food.

"Consumers are no longer prepared to accept blanket statements that there is no risk," Alan Malcolm of the Institute for Food Research told the conference.

Clinton's approval rating drops

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Bill Clinton's approval rating dropped from 60 to 55 per cent after six weeks of almost daily revelations on White House fund-raising activities, according to a Washington Post-ABC news survey.

Seventy per cent believe it was inappropriate for the president to use the White House to raise campaign donations, while 60 per cent were critical of Vice President Al Gore for soliciting contributions by telephone.

Forty-seven per cent suspect Mr. Clinton "changed policies" for some of the biggest donors, but only 31 per cent believe the president and Mr. Gore did something illegal.

The survey was the first sign the ongoing controversy over campaign financing activities by the White House and the Democratic Party has affected Mr. Clinton's approval rating, which had been steadily rising for nearly two years.

Fifty-five per cent approved the president's handling of the economy, down from 61 per cent six weeks ago, and 50 per cent approved his foreign policy, down from 54 per cent.

However, people trusted Mr. Clinton over the Republican-controlled Congress to deal with the country's worst problems by a 49-38 per cent margin.

And 60 per cent said they still like Mr. Clinton, while an almost equal proportion said Mr. Gore has the "honesty and integrity" to serve as president some day.

In the March 6-9 survey, 1,004 people were interviewed with a four per cent margin of error.

The campaign financing controversy dogging President Clinton and his Democratic Party escalated Monday, with the White House and the FBI publicly at odds over an FBI warning that China might try to funnel money into the U.S. election campaign.

Mr. Clinton Monday said he was kept in the dark about the warning last year and is now trying to find out why.

And in an extraordinary exchange, the White House and the FBI publicly disputed the facts surrounding an FBI briefing of two intelligence specialists at the National Security Council (NSC) last June.

Yeltsin sacks government but keeps Chernomyrdin, Chubais

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin announced Tuesday that he was dismissing the entire Russian government except for Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais.

In a decree on "measures to ensure the efficiency of federal executive bodies," Mr. Yeltsin announced that all the posts of first deputy prime minister except one would be scrapped, along with some deputy prime minister posts.

Before Mr. Chubais' appointment Friday, Russia had three posts of first deputy prime minister — covering the economy, social issues and industry — and 11 deputy prime minister posts.

Mr. Yeltsin said the number of other government posts would also be reduced, in line with proposals from Mr. Chernomyrdin.

The decree, faxed to AFP by the Kremlin Press Service, gave Mr. Chernomyrdin a week in which to draw up a list of candidates to form the new government, which would be appointed by Mr. Yeltsin.

In his state of the nation speech to parliament Thursday, Mr. Yeltsin promised that the government's structure and personnel would change. He lambasted government "fat cats" for their failure to tackle chronic delays in wage and pension

payments.

Millions of state workers and pensioners have gone unpaid for months, amid a general internal debt crisis, aggravated by the government's poor record on tax collection.

The appointment of Mr. Chubais, a liberal economist who was formerly Mr. Yeltsin's chief of staff, was seen as a sign of Mr. Yeltsin's determination to breathe new life into the sluggish market reforms.

It was also a snub to the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, which is dominated by Communists and nationalists who have repeatedly demanded Mr. Chubais' head and called for Mr. Yeltsin's resignation during his eight-month absence from the Kremlin.

Mr. Chernomyrdin and Mr. Chubais effectively ran the country during Mr. Yeltsin's absence due to heart problems and pneumonia following his reelection last July.

By sacking the entire government except Mr. Chernomyrdin and Mr. Chubais, Mr. Yeltsin avoided having to get a vote of confidence from the Duma for the new government.

The Duma threatened to hold a vote of no confidence in the government after Mr. Chubais' appointment, but previous such attempts failed to get a majority.

Mr. Chubais, 41, who masterminded Russia's con-

troversial mass privatisation

programme, is expected to play a key role in forming the new cabinet. He is reviled by the headline opposition, who accuse him of having impoverished millions of Russians.

He and his aides helped to write Mr. Yeltsin's strongly reformist speech, which accused the government and parliament of bureaucratic incompetence and feathering their own nests.

The position of Finance Minister Alexander Livshits has looked shaky since Mr. Chernomyrdin accused his ministry of "excessive bureaucracy and self-importance."

Economy Minister Yevgeny Yasin could also be sacrificed, analysts say.

Mr. Yeltsin recently criticised Defence Minister Igor Rodionov for "lamentations" about the wretched state of the armed forces, reminding him that he was responsible for implementing military reform.

In his speech, Mr. Yeltsin listed corruption as one of the government's biggest problems, and said "no one must be unaccountable." He vowed to restore order to the management of federal funds.

He also promised fundamental reforms to the 1.7-million-strong armed forces, which consist mainly of poorly-trained conscripts and were humiliated in the Chechnya war.

Doctors urge Africa to end women's genital mutilation

MARRAKESH, Morocco (R) — Medical experts urged African countries Monday to abandon genital mutilation of women, saying two million young girls suffered this each year, often causing complications in childbirth.

Meeting in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh, the specialists particularly targeted Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan for a tradition to which much of a girl's genitals are cut away, often crudely and painfully.

"On behalf of this world congress, I urge African states to put an end to such practice ... There is no one religion that prescribes female genital mutilation," Dr. Daniel Weinstein, president of the World Society on Labour and Delivery, told reporters.

"Every year, two million women and girls are mutilated in Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and other African countries," he said, adding: "The mutilated women ... often face complications during childbirth."

The meeting of more than 750 health specialists is focused on trying to bring down the number of women who die in childbirth, which Dr. Weinstein put at six million since the start of the 1990s.

Marlene Edith Post, president of the U.S.-

based Hadassah International Medical Relief Association, termed this record of maternal mortality ... "worse than AIDS disease...because women are the first target of both human tragedies."

"Mutilation is another issue we will examine during this meeting," Swedish specialist Rosemary Holst from Gothenburg Obstetric Department said some 120 million African women were already mutilated for life on "sexual, social, hygienic, aesthetic or religious" grounds.

"The most serious form, infibulation, affects almost the entire female population of Somalia," she said.

Infibulation involves cutting of the clitoris and most of the labia, and complications can be immediate or longterm, she said.

Delegates include some from 18 African countries, one of whom said: "Mutilation is above all an African tradition" which has existed for several thousand years.

Ms. Holst said she planned to display a list of 30 African countries where world medical experts knew mutilation was carried out. It would be headed, she said, by Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Egypt.

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Netanyahu defies peace

THE IMPACT of the "real crisis," brewing between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel over the extent of Israel's first-stage withdrawal and the plan to construct a new Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, among others, was nowhere felt strongly as in the resignation of chief Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas and his team. Mr. Abbas became outraged Monday at the extent of Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy's intransigence on the latest issues dividing the two sides. A follow-up meeting between PNA senior official Yasser Abed Rabbo and Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai also failed to heal the rift between them, which led Mr. Abed Rabbo to declare that "there is a crisis and the crisis is becoming worse and worse."

The Palestinians' anger and frustration are fully shared by Jordan. His Majesty King Hussein has sent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a strong rebuke for the premier's failure to yield to logic and reason. The monarch warned that the ongoing crisis threatens to blow up the entire peace process and not only the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. His Majesty's disappointment became exacerbated when Netanyahu even barred a Royal plane from flying the Palestinian president from Amman to Gaza at the conclusion of his talks few days ago.

At the heart of the crisis lies the realisation that Israel is determined to go ahead with the Judaisation of the whole of Jerusalem and isolating it from the rest of the Palestinian territories. The latest U.S. veto of a U.N. Security Council draft resolution calling on Israel not to go ahead with its plans to build on Jabal Abu Ghneim seems to have strengthened Israel's hand in this and also in closing down Palestinian offices in the city and continuing to withdraw ID cards from Arab Jerusalemites.

Furthermore, Israeli basic intentions to transfer to the PNA over the entire Palestinian population, albeit at minimum territorial concessions are becoming clearer by the day. Area A under the Israeli redeployment plan from which Israel has withdrawn comprises eight Palestinian cities populated by half a million Palestinians but occupying only three per cent of the territory. Area B from which Israel appears ready to turn over responsibility to the Palestinian side is populated by more than half a million but comprises only 24 per cent of the territories occupied. This effectively leaves 73 per cent of the Palestinian lands populated by only 30,000 people under direct Israeli control.

This stark reality is that Netanyahu's policies are telling the Palestinians there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Netanyahu's only comment at the Arab anger over these policies is to state to Israel Radio Monday that "they (meaning the Arabs) have finally realised that a nationalist government now holds power in Israel." With this comment we might as well lose hope that the right-wing government in Israel will deliver on its country's commitments and respect the agreements that it signed.

But because we cannot afford to lose hope, we have to find a different way in dealing with Netanyahu and his policies. The parameters of this new approach have to be worked out by the Arab World as a whole, which may mean that an Arab summit has to be convened. The next step would be to rally support of the international community behind the new effort. Netanyahu can hang on to his obstinacy and intransigence for a while. But in the end, he cannot stand up to a whole world whose platform is justice and peace.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Rai Tuesday defended the Hebron agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis, saying that without that agreement the peace process on the Israeli-Palestinian track would have remained deadlocked. Faded Fatah said that critics are not happy about the 20 per cent of the city remaining in Israeli hands, but this situation will continue until the final status negotiations only, and the separation of the Jews from areas in Hebron is a logical and just exercise for separating the Jews from the Arabs in Jerusalem. Indeed, the Hebron deal was a gain for the Likud-led government which vowed never to withdraw from any part of the Palestinian territories, said the writer, who stressed that the Israelis are now committed to withdrawing from the rest of the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967. The Palestinians have ceded nothing in their negotiations with Israel and in fact their Oslo agreement with Israel was in line with the provisions of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, added the writer. With Jordan's backing, he said, the Palestinians have also secured a timetable for Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, despite the delay that occurred in the past months.

A WRITER for Al Dustour Tuesday demanded that those responsible for the contaminated maize, at the Ministry of Supply's warehouses, be held accountable for their action and for neglect. Mohammad Dawoud said that JD \$8 million worth of maize has been lost because the animal feed was found contaminated with bacteria and unfit for animal consumption. The Ministry of Supply is the prime party responsible for this loss to the national economy and it is the ministry's duty to open a thorough investigation into this issue so that this practice will not be repeated, demanded the writer. He said investigation and punishment of those responsible for the loss are not enough, and the concerned authorities should come up with an appropriate system for buying and storing the animal feed to ensure that nothing is wasted in the future. The writer said punishing those responsible for the loss should be the first step towards addressing this issue.

The Washington Watch

The U.S. press and the Empire State shooting

By Dr. James Zogby

ON JAN. 23, a 69-year-old Palestinian from Gaza, Ali Abu Kamal, opened fire while on the observation desk at the top of the Empire State Building in New York City. By the end of his shooting spree, he had killed one and injured six. He then killed himself. Among the victims of this outrageous act were a Danish rock star, who was killed, a Swiss tourist, an Argentinean tourist, an Hispanic immigrant and two babies, one five months and the other 18 months old.

This was a tragedy that shook New York and the rest of the U.S. For three days, the story of Ali Abu Kamal was front page fare across the nation. It did not, however, lead to an anti-Arab frenzy. Editors and writers, with only a few exceptions, saw the event for what it was — a personal tragedy for the victims and their families, and even for Abu Kamal and his family.

What anger there was, was directed at lax U.S. gun laws and the lax security arrangements at the top of the Empire State Building.

This was true even in New York City's two tabloid newspapers, the New York Post and the New York Daily News, both of which often sensationalise stories that involve Arabs.

The Post, for the most part, was exemplary in its treatment. In the two days the paper splashed the story across its front pages

in three-inch, bold headlines, no mention was made of Mr. Kamal's Palestinian or Arab nationality. He was simply described as a "shooter" or a "gunman."

The first day's story did not even include mention of Abu Kamal's name — even though it was known. Only in its editorial did the Post stoop to anti-Arab treatment. This editorial was the only anti-Arab editorial that appeared in any major U.S. newspaper covering the story.

The Post editorial writer linked Abu Kamal with Rashid Baz (the Lebanese cab driver who three years ago, in Brooklyn, NY, opened fire on a van carrying Jewish students, killing one), and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. While acknowledging that Abu Kamal was not a terrorist but a man with "personal problems," the Post editorial asked why "everybody with a screw loose in the Middle East ends up in New York."

After this bigoted exaggeration, the Post's second day's coverage of the story was surprisingly objective, in-depth, and even thoughtful.

The front page headline read, "Descent into hell — final days of the Empire State shooter and why he snapped." The lead story was a personal profile of Abu Kamal, an attempt to understand the pressures that led him to his mad act. The paper also included: a moving account of the reaction of Abu Kamal's

family in Gaza; profiles of the victims of the shooting; four articles mentioning how lax gun laws made it too easy for anyone to purchase a gun thereby increasing the possibility for murder to occur; an article on the absence of security at the Empire State Building; and a fair and sensitive treatment of shock and sadness felt by New York's Palestinian American community entitled, "Stick thing not an Arab thing."

New York's other tabloid, the Daily News also ran the story with three-inch, front page headlines on two consecutive days. On both days Abu Kamal's name was not used and there was no reference to his nationality. The headlines simply described him as a "gunman" on day one and "a shooter" on day two.

Like the Post, the Daily News featured profiles of the victims; articles critical of gun laws and Empire State Building Security's treatment of the demise of Abu Kamal in which he was described as "a man who lost all hope"; and an article on reactions of New York's Arab American community. In both the Post and the Daily News stories on the Arab American reactions, quotes used established clearly the shock and grief Arab Americans shared with their fellow New Yorkers.

The Daily News, like almost all newspapers nationwide, featured two large photos, one of Abu Kamal's oldest daughter

grieving and another, a poignant picture of Abu Kamal's youngest son in Gaza carrying a large photo of his father.

This was how the two most sensationalist and usually anti-Arab papers covered the tragic shooting. The major U.S. dailies, among them the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times were equally fair and faithful to the principle of good journalism. Articles and photos reflected the same general treatment given by the tabloids. There was no sensationalism and no Arab-baiting.

The only editorial to appear in a major daily was in the New York Times. It was entitled, "A preventable tragedy" and called for more effective gun control laws. While all the major papers carried pieces on the victims, lax security and gun laws, and extensive and sensitive pieces on Abu Kamal's descent into madness and violence and the reaction of his family, only the New York Times reprinted, in full, the note left by Abu Kamal in which he described his anger and desire for revenge. Since the letter included references to Zionism and the loss of Palestinian rights, it could have been exploited and sensationalised.

But the New York Times published it in full and in its accompanying article made clear that the letter described not a terrorist but a profoundly disturbed

man who had descended into despair and insane violence.

In his letter, Abu Kamal listed his enemies who, he said, had to be "annihilated and exterminated." They included: "The Americans, the British, the French and the Zionists; the gang of rogues who attacked me in my office in Gaza in 1993; an officer in the Egyptian army who beat him; and three Palestinian students who robbed and beat his son in Ukraine."

Throughout the coverage of this tragedy it was clear that this was not terrorism, but the act of a deranged individual.

With the exception of one editorial, commentary from a few right-wing radio talk show hosts and some complaints that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had paid a few visits to a few Arab Americans seeking information, the treatment of this entire episode was quite different from Arabs have come to expect and fear. This time, Arabs and Muslims did not become targets of the press. They did not become incidental victims as they have on too many occasions in the past.

One month after the killings, President Bill Clinton issued an executive order tightening U.S. gun control laws. It was this issue and the need for enhanced security at the Empire State Building and not Arabs or Muslims that emerged as the focal points of discussion from the Abu Kamal shooting.

Turkish Islam is stronger than Western secularism

By G. H. Jansen

TURKEY, in the past few days and weeks, has been passing through an acute attack of national schizophrenia, a schism in the soul, running along several fault lines. The most important and dangerous of these is the one between "the people" and "the army."

For Turkey is a strongly devout Muslim state based on a strongly devout Muslim people. But for the past half century, the Turkish officer corps, in its middle and upper ranks, has been suppressing and subverting those essential elements in the Turkish national character and forcing Turkey and its people into a straightjacket of Western-style "secularism," which the Turks call "laik-ism." The founder of this shallow and twisted secular dogma is, of course, Kemal Ataturk, the "Father of the Turkish Nation," who, after three pro-Kemalist coups d'état in 37 years could just as well be called "the Father of National Misfortune."

Of course, this is not at all the evaluation of Ataturk and Atatürkism by Western analysts, for he and his policy have paid the West the ultimate compliment of imitation — which is the sincerest form of flattery.

However, the devout Muslim people has not followed the Kemalist approach to Islam which, indeed, has been nothing short of Islamophobia.

These sociological factors have come to the surface of Turkish political life in recent weeks because the Turkish coalition government has been trying to implement the moderate Islamic policies of the Welfare Party under Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

And last weekend the generals carried out a "soft," non-violent coup when, during a nine hour meeting of the National Security Council, they issued an anti-Islamic list of 20 demands which they insisted he must implement. Among these demands were a ban on the building of mosques and prohibitions on Islamic teaching from the schools and Islamic dress — the wearing of headscarves by women. The generals also sought to curb the functioning of Islamic brotherhoods, called "tanques," and to stop the sale of hunting guns to Muslim activists.

None of the demands will survive for long. And this is why the secularist army command had to reaffirm its secularist

dogma by fresh coups every ten years. In 1960, 1971 and 1980, and almost certainly will have to do so some time in the late 1990s — at least before the year 2000.

The democratic West should have disapproved of this challenge to a civilian government posed by insubordinate soldiers, but that has not happened because the challenge fits in with current, fashionable Western Islamophobia.

On March 5, under army bullying, Erbakan was obliged to accept the demands of the National Security Council. But only for the time being because, as in any Muslim country, the Islamists comprise the mass of the people. In Turkey, Islam is alive and well: the mosques are not crowded except for the mid-day prayers on Friday but are well attended; on the main streets of towns and cities an increasing number of young women are donning the headscarf and more young men are sporting beards.

Two questions require answers. Why is Islamic influence so strong and persistent? And why are the secularists so scared of Islam in public life?

The answer to the first is that Turkish Islam is part of a worldwide religion which, as a faith, is in its 14th century of life, still in vigorous, early middle age and not, like Christianity, aged and worn-out. And the Turkish politico-military establishment is against political Islam because the form in which it was expressed was the Ottoman Caliphate — decrepit, effete and ineffective — that Ataturk abolished in Turkey 1924. But political Islam in Turkey, particularly as exemplified by the moderate, reformist, Welfare Party today, is something very different from that practised in Indonesia, Iran, Afghanistan or even Bosnia, in the Balkans.

One has only to see, as has this writer, Turkish pilgrims, hajjis, performing the pilgrimage at Mecca and Mount Arafat to understand in their religious eagerness and devotion that these are not persons who are going to obey the commands of remote Westernised generals sitting in Ankara or Istanbul. After all, Ataturk banned Turkish participation in the Hajj for many years, ultimately to no avail.

As a Turkish columnist, Fikret Bita, put it, "The National Security Council decision looks more like a beginning than an end." True enough, but the secularist army command

LETTERS

Humane thing to do

To the Editor:

I AM writing to continue the open discussion about how to improve conditions and secure a wholesome future for the children in government-run orphanages.

The Royal family's personal attention and swift action in response to the most recent crisis affecting the orphans at Al Hussein Social Welfare Institute are commendable. His Majesty's moving personal account of the unacceptable conditions he found and his huge gesture of offering Al Hashemiyeh Palace as a better home for these children have already inspired other important contributions.

Still, securing a better facility and obtaining financial or in-kind contributions are not enough to ensure that these children will thrive and develop to their full potential.

I also agree with Sue Abu Nowar's letter "Teaching compassion" (Jordan Times, March 10, 1997), that the educational certificates of care-givers are less important than the care-givers' ability to provide the kind of consistent emotional and physical affection that small children need to thrive and develop to their full potential. It is a well-known precept of early child development that babies who are not held when fed, who do not hear soothing words and songs and who do not learn to attach emotionally to their primary care-givers (usually parents) will not gain weight properly or be able to develop their full mental and physical capacities. It is even hypothesised that such lack of attachment is a contributing factor in learning disabilities, such as "attention deficit disorder."

I would like to suggest that there are many, many more Jordanians who could contribute something to the care of these innocent souls. You do not have to be rich or own a factory to make a lasting gift to these children. You just have to be willing to give some time and attention. Few orphanages, even in the most wealthy countries, can afford sufficient staff to respond to each child's individual emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

Why not start a volunteer programme

for residents — foreigners and citizens alike — to share the responsibility for our little neighbours? Perhaps some NGO or other institutions would be willing to coordinate scheduling and, perhaps, transportation. Families could undertake volunteer work as a family pledge: grandparents, parents and older children could all play different roles at different times of day. Such tasks as holding babies while bottle-feeding, rocking them and singing to them or bathing them could be done by anyone, whether they are fluent in Arabic or not. Arabic-speakers would be needed to play with older babies and toddlers, to teach them baby songs, numbers and letters, read them books and to encourage their physical and mental development over time. Younger children could donate their used toys and books and spend some time playing with orphans their age. Wouldn't it be great if each orphaned child had a "family" that would pledge to include that child in family outings, holiday meals or just a walk in the countryside, on a regular basis? Children in institutions hunger for human affection and personal attention. Your time is the most precious gift you could give.

Another advantage of this kind of volunteer programme would be the opportunity it provides for regular oversight and public advocacy on behalf of the children, should there be any future lapses in administration or direct care. It also could go a long way towards dispelling the negative stereotypes about orphans still prevalent in Jordanian society.

I have always been impressed by Islam's insistence that the protection and care of orphans is the responsibility of the whole community. Let's look for ways to make sure that these children are not forgotten by us once again and to ensure that they will grow up knowing the warmth of other people who take care of them because it is the humane thing to do, not just someone else's job.

Kathy Sullivan,
Amman.

Isn't it telling?

To the Editor:

ISN'T IT just telling that while Jordan so proudly marked the occasion of International Women's Day, with workshops and calls for supporting the recommendations of the World Conference on Women held in Beijing, a father in rural Karak crushes the skull of his 15-year-old daughter because he had an inkling that she may have had a relation with a shepherd.

Where are you? You who say you

care, you who say something must be done? How can someone who is blessed with bringing a child into the world take that life away only a few years later? Isn't it just sickening? Isn't this a crime of "dishonour" of a nation?

Jennifer Hamarneh,
Amman.IT
OCCURRED
TO MEGrouch
or guffaw

By Ali Kassay

AT LAST spring and summer begin to make their approach, to replace a winter that took an enormously long time to make its presence felt, and then, having got down to serious action, seems ever so reluctant to leave. At this time of the year, I always look forward, with great anticipation to the opening up of the terraces at my favourite watering holes, where Jordanians gather every evening to sit around a table in the cool evening breeze, sipping an invigorating potpourri and frowning at each other. No, seriously. Have you ever noticed it? At weddings and parties, all forms of festive entertainment, or even at casual get-togethers, Jordanians will be there eating, drinking, dancing, clapping their hands and making merry, but always with their faces set in a grim scowl.

Many visitors to our fair and bounteous lands come to love the place. Invariably there will always be others who like it somewhat less. But all and sundry notice and inquire about the Jordanian scowl.

In all likelihood, Jordanians frown a lot because they do not listen to news. For instance, they should draw comfort from the great progress which, we are constantly told, our economy is making, to the admiration of friend and foe. Instead, they choose the gloom of looking at their ever-windling purses and wondering where the next meal is coming from.

For instance, Jordanians should take heart, even rejoice at the "great success" that Jordan's tourism promotion activity has had in Berlin. This, as our media and officialdom, whose word is their bond, inform us constantly is the way forward that will bring prosperity to all. Unfortunately, such a well intentioned and sincere message is wasted on the public, who insist, instead, on reading the insidious and unreasonable letters to the editor published in the Jordan Times and the numerous other letters sent directly to tour agents from tour promoters in the West (including Germany), in which they state that they have reluctantly eliminated Jordan from their list of destinations for no other reason than the mismanagement of sites and poor quality of services.

You cannot reason with such lack of logic. When you have official statements assuring you that all is well, and that the happy days are here again, instead of revealing in them, Jordanians choose the gloom induced by mere facts.

But this is not good for them. A whole body of medical evidence proves conclusively that laughter is good for you. Julius Caesar, with his piercing perception, had come to the same conclusion when he expressed his wish to have around him men who are fat. But it requires money in the pocket and food in the tummy for people to grow fat. So, a friend of mine came up with an alternative plan to make Jordanians laugh. He suggested falling back on the infectious effect of laughter.

He suggested creating a new department in the civil service, the function of which would be to send its field officers to every public or private gathering. Once there, they would sit for a while, minding their own business, then suddenly burst out in guffaws of sustained laughter. At first people will be puzzled, but eventually they will not be able to resist at least a slight twitching of the corners of the mouth in an upward direction. Soon after, who knows, perhaps Jordanians may start having a bit of fun out of life.

King voices deep distress

(Continued from page 1)

in creating yet a fresh exodus of hapless Palestinians from their, and their ancestors, home land and bury the peace process for all times.

On the question of your withdrawal from territories you have committed Israel, before the U.S., Jordan and the world, to complete the process by mid-1998, what good did it serve to offer such an insignificant first phase withdrawal? Why the apparent continued deliberate humiliation of your so called Palestinian partners? Can any worthwhile relationship thrive in the absence of mutual respect and trust? Why are Palestinians still confirming that their agricultural products still rot awaiting entry into Israel and export? Why the delay when it is known that unless work is authorised to commence on the Gaza port, before the end of this month, the complete project would suffer a year's delay? Finally, the Gaza

Airport — all of us have addressed the subject numerous times with a view to having a legitimate Palestinian need met and to give their leaders and people their own free access to the world rather than their present confinement and need to exit and return through other sovereign territories. I had requested permission and intended to fly President Arafat myself, in Jordan's official State Tistar, to the Palestinian airport of Gaza as I had requested earlier, during my Hebron intervention, to fly by a fixed-wing aircraft accepting your refusal then only because there were far more important issues at hand.

I anticipated your positive response this time. I believe it would have helped improve the atmosphere considerably but, alas, it was not to be. Now, suppose I had taken off nonetheless for Gaza, in the full right of a friend, then would you have ordered my fellow pilots in the Israeli air force — those who escorted me

on the same aircraft over Israel in what became known as the 'First Flight of Peace' — "it seems so long ago" — to prevent me forcibly from landing or worse? You will never know how close you came to having to make a decision on the subject had I, on this occasion, not planned to carry guests back home. How can I work with you as a partner and true friend in this confused and confusing atmosphere when I sense an intent to destroy all I worked to build between our peoples and states. Stubbornness over real issues is one thing, but for its own sake, I wonder. In any event I have discovered that you have your own mindset and appear in no need for any advice from a friend.

I deeply regret having to write you this personal message but it is my sense of responsibility and concern which has prompted me for posterity to do so in the face of the unknown.

Mordechai visits Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

after talks with Mr. Mordechai.

"We warn of unilateral moves that could lead us to difficult choices," he told reporters, hinting that Jordan might freeze its efforts to normalise relations with Israel.

"If we are not to talk about justice and if we are not to talk about confidence and trust then I don't think there is a meaning for the peace process," he said.

Mr. Kabriti stressed that King Hussein would ask

President Bill Clinton to press Israel to reconsider its moves in a White House meeting slated for March 18.

Mr. Mordechai, on his first visit to Jordan, admitted there was tension with Jordan, but stressed that ties were strong. After the meeting with the King, he said that King Hussein "would continue with the peace process and make it much closer and warmer."

Mr. Mordechai said: "I had the opportunity to talk with the King and the prime minister. Jordan and Israel

will continue with the peace process and we will make much a warm and close (peace). You have to know that most of the population of Israel and I think all the population of Israel admire His Majesty and believe that they will continue to make it much more closer warm and serving the interests of both countries of Jordan and Israel."

"We talked about the situation now and in the future and both of us believe that we can move forward and it is possible to move forward and His Majesty is going to support the peace and to do all his best that together we will continue," he said.

"I am sure they will find a way to negotiate. There are some misunderstandings but I am sure we can overcome those problems," he said of the Israeli and Palestinian sides. "Both of them are honest and respect each other."

But Mr. Kabriti, who pointedly declined to appear in public with the Israeli general, said his government was not impressed with Israel's justifications for its moves.

"I affirmed to the Israeli minister that Israel, with its unilateral decisions, either over settlements or on the scale of the redeployment, has put the Palestinians in a great predicament, whose results (the Palestinians) have to bear alone," Mr. Kabriti said. "Jordan rejects these decisions."

"No matter what the reasoning of the Israeli government regarding Jabal Abu Ghneim and regarding the implementation of the redeployment, we don't think we have got satisfactory answers," he said.

Normalisation of ties in peril, Kabariti warns Israel

(Continued from page 1)

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had killed the peace process.

"The announcement by Mr. Netanyahu of plans to build an Israeli settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim is tantamount to an announcement to the whole world and to the Palestinians in particular that the Jerusalem file at the final status negotiations has been closed in favour of Israel," Mr. Masri said. He added that the failure to establish a Palestinian state on the Arab territories occupied since 1967 with Jerusalem as its capital jeopardises Jordan's national security and leads to the establishment of an alternative homeland, "something that we all reject and resist."

Deputy Khalil Haddadin called on the government, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Arab governments to stop all dealings with Israel, recall ambassadors and diplomats from Israel and close the Israeli embassies and offices in Arab capitals.

He also called for stopping all forms of cultural, economic and political normalisation with Israel.

Mr. Haddadin stressed the importance of Arab solidarity to foil Israel's expansionist policy, and warned of Israeli plans to expand to other Arab countries, particularly Jordan.

Deputy Abdul Raouf Al Rawabdeh condemned the Israeli government's position towards the peace process and its attempts to derail it.

Addressing the House session on behalf of the National Action Front (NAF) and the National Constitutional Party, Mr. Rawabdeh condemned the U.S. administration's position and continuous support for Israel despite its defiance of international legitimacy. The use of its veto right against a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel's measures in Jerusalem proves beyond doubt that the U.S. can no longer be a neutral and objective mediator or broker, he said.

Mr. Rawabdeh called on Islamic countries to hold an Islamic summit to show support for the Palestinians and protect Jerusalem from any attempts to change its features and to take the

practical steps to preserve its Arab identity.

Deputy Anwar Al Hadid said Jerusalem enjoys an advanced position on the agenda of the Jordanian leadership, and called on Jordan to take the initiative of calling Arab and Muslim leaders to convene a summit to discuss this issue and come up with clear messages and decisions, set to place the U.S. in the right position as far as the peace process and the Jerusalem issue are concerned.

Mr. Hadid also said the issue of Jerusalem was a Jordanian concern, just as it was a Palestinian concern. "History will not forgive us if we do not rise to its defence," he said.

Deputy Hammam Saeed called for convening an emergency summit for Arab countries bordering Israel and for an Islamic conference to discuss the grave situation in Jerusalem and the "bleak future awaiting Al Aqsa Mosque."

Speaking on behalf of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), Dr. Saeed pointed out that Israel has changed the demographic nature of Jerusalem.

He noted that talking about Jerusalem means talking about the entire Arab and Islamic sovereignty over the city, and not about the Arab eastern part of the city.

Deputy Samir Habashneh called on Arab leaders to implement the resolutions of the Cairo summit held last year and to look into other means for dealing with the latest changes and to stop the Israeli's programmes and plans against peace.

Mr. Habashneh called on Arab parliamentarians who will meet in Cairo in April to support the implementation of the Cairo summit resolutions on Jerusalem.

He also called for mounting a Jordanian campaign to expose "the U.S. intransigence and Israel's defiance of the principles of the Madrid peace process and international resolutions."

Mr. Habashneh called on the Jordanian and Arab people to stop all forms of dealing with Israel as a "gesture of protest and disapproval with Israel's racist policy."

Deputy Toujan Faisal called on Israel to honour all international resolutions and criticised the U.S. position.

Deputy Trad Qadi stressed the need for solving inter-Arab differences and unifying Arab ranks to face the challenges facing the nation. He called on the Arabs to exercise pressures on their governments to adopt a united firm position towards the Israeli policies.

Deputy Bassam Emoush lauded the government's firm position towards the Israeli settlement policy.

Deputy Deeb Abdullah called for reviving the call for jihad as the only formula to unite Arabs and Muslims to enable them to restore Jerusalem.

Deputy Bassam Haddadin called for freezing relations with Israel and for recalling the Jordanian ambassador in Tel Aviv. He said restoration of relations should be linked with Israel's commitment to honour its obligations.

Deputy Nazih Ammarin said what was happening in Jerusalem represents a challenge for the Arab will, credibility and existence.

Following are excerpts from Prime Minister Kabriti's speech to the House:

"Jordan considers Arab Jerusalem as a Jordanian internal affair as it is an Arab and Islamic affair. Jordan has included a special clause in its peace treaty with Israel dealing with the Islamic and Christian holy places in Arab Jerusalem guaranteeing its custody of these places pending a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians about the city."

"For Jordan, Jerusalem is a historic record as it is for the Hashemites and the Jordanian people who have struggled and shed blood and sacrificed martyrs in its defence."

"We would like to emphasise that any aggression on Arab Jerusalem is not only a violation of the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords but also a flagrant violation of the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty, an encroachment on international legitimacy and damaging to the Israeli government's credibility in the peace building process. Such aggression is bound to create tension that threatens the peace process and opens the door for serious situations which the Israelis cannot control..."

"It is illogical for the Israelis to expect from the

Palestinians to serve as a police force protecting Israeli bulldozers which devour Jerusalem and to exercise self-restraint and refrain from escalating the situation.

"Israel should realise that it can by no means establish normal relations with Jordan and the Arab and Islamic countries while pursuing illegal policies in Arab Jerusalem. It should realise that it is impossible for it to continue building peace and Jewish settlements at the same time."

"His Majesty King Hussein has voiced Jordan's rejection of any change in the status of Jerusalem before the end of the final status negotiations to avert any obstruction to the peace process, the loss of mutual confidence and the creation of frustration among the people of the region. The King had said that the construction of Jewish settlements in Arab East Jerusalem threatens the peace in the entire Middle East region and threatens all achievements realised so far on the path of peace. He made it clear that any party which takes (illegal) decisions should be ready to be confronted with reactions to these measures."

"This means that settlements and peace do not go together and that Jordan considers the settlements as illegitimate. Jordan is not satisfied only with a bilateral peace treaty with Israel and will continue to seek comprehensive peace."

"Our stand is identical with that of the Palestinians with regard to Arab Jerusalem, the settlement issue, the closure of Palestinian institutions in Arab Jerusalem and the implementation of the Oslo accord."

"Jordan will continue to support the Palestinian leadership's struggle to regain Palestinian rights. We condemn the Israeli stand and settlements policies which undermine peace accords and violate the Israeli's peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt."

"We have come to an agreement with the Palestinians on a united front to confront the Israeli measures and their consequences through intensification of contacts and consultations with major powers which wield influence on the peace process."

"The worldwide angry reactions to the Israeli government's decision serves as a clear evidence of the success of the joint Palestinian-Jordanian diplomatic offensive which will continue at all forums to remove all Israeli obstacles in the path of peace."

"In our joint endeavour we realise that an improvement in the living conditions of the liberated Palestinians is bound to enhance our brothers' steadfastness, political will and negotiating stand. For this reason we have concluded a series of agreements to promote economic, industrial, educational and other forms of cooperation with the Palestinian people."

"It is not the first time in which the peace process faces real crisis. But we have to intensify our efforts and pursue all avenues towards the attainment of peace."

"We do not believe in passing decisions on freezing or severing (relations). This is an easy diplomatic conduct allowing one to sit back and express satisfaction with what he had done. Taking such a stand under the circumstances would only give justification and excuse to the other side to close the door, shirk their responsibilities and commitments and suspend the peace process, thus creating a tense and explosive atmosphere which does not serve the Palestinian cause."

"We can help the Palestinians to regain their rights and their lands through negotiations and dialogue. We all need patience and perseverance and clear vision to mobilise our efforts to attain a just peace."

"We cannot turn our back to the peace process because if we did we would let down our Palestinian brothers and abandon their cause before the Israeli onslaught. We cannot be of any use if we withdraw from the peace efforts leaving behind the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Lebanese to deal separately with their problem."

"We cannot stop our endeavours and turn our backs to agreements and so give Israel the excuse to go back on agreements and continue swallowing Arab land."

even more isolated position.

"We are sure that there will be near unanimous support," said Palestinian representative Nasser Al Kidwa, who said the resolution would be "basically the same text" as the one presented to the Security Council.

The General Assembly was set to meet Wednesday, with a vote expected Thursday.

U.S. ready to attend international meeting called by Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

conference on Saturday in Gaza. We certainly, if an invitation is formally issued to the United States, will be there," department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Israel's foreign minister said that the Palestinians' effort to draw the international community

into their latest dispute with Israel could destroy the peace process.

"Any attempt for international intervention will lead to a freeze in the peace process," said David Levy, reacting to Palestinian plans to host diplomats from the United States, Europe, the Arab World and Japan in the Gaza Strip for the weekend meeting.

At the same time, Mr. Levy and other Israeli officials have suggested that they would welcome an effort by the United States to mediate.

Earlier Tuesday, Mr. Levy called U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to discuss the Gaza conference, said a foreign ministry official.

The Palestinian U.N. del-

egate meanwhile predicted that a General Assembly resolution criticising Israel's settlement plan for Arab East Jerusalem would get "near unanimous" support.

By bringing the matter to the 185-member General Assembly following the U.S. veto of a similar resolution in the Security Council, Israel and the United States are likely to be in an

Crown Prince returns home

(Continued from page 1)

highlighted the investment opportunities available in Jordan and the incentives the Kingdom provides to investors.

The Crown Prince, who was accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Saraya, said the Barcelona process resulted in a 12-billion European Currency Units development programme to the Mediterranean countries.

He added the London conference, which brought together the 12 Mediterranean states and the 15 EU countries, is geared towards promoting investment opportunities in the Mediterranean region.

Prince Hassan reiterated the need of the Arab states to maintain their presence in the international arenas and to promote investment opportunities in the Arab World.

In an interview with the BBC Television, the Crown Prince warned against the Israeli policy of building settlements saying it created an atmosphere of mistrust.

He also condemned the building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and said the building of these settlements contravenes Israel's commitment for achieving and safeguarding peace and co-existence in the Middle East.

Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's support for the Palestinian leadership and people in their quest for their legitimate rights on their national soil, stressing the illegality of occupying Palestinian lands and describing Israel's annexation of Arab East Jerusalem as contravening the international laws.

The Crown Prince called for fighting "Islamophobia" describing Islam as a religion of peace unaffiliated with either violence or terrorism.

In another speech, Crown Prince Hassan underlined the need for the Middle East region to enjoy peace after decades of a state of war and said that peace means the establishment of justice and mutual respect.

"For the last half century in between relatively brief outbreaks of war, this region has existed in an uneasy state. For long periods of time, there was no formal state of war; armies did not fight one another. But tension and hostility were ever present," Prince Hassan said.

The Crown Prince was delivering a lecture at Westminster Abbey to commemorate Sydney Bailey, a scholar who had intensively worked for the promotion of world peace.

Prince Hassan told the meeting, organised by the Council for Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament: "Peace means more than the absence of war. It means mutual respect, compassion, humility, tolerance and empathy."

"This, to my mind, is the key to release from sequential historical grievances, the key to forgiveness and the key to new beginnings," said the Crown Prince.

"Only if we truly comprehend what suffering means can we begin to overcome it. For such is the nature of redemption," continued Prince Hassan.

Prince Hassan said that peace was something that must be built up and maintained and not something that could just be made at the stroke of a pen and then forgotten.

"In our century alone around 200 million people have been killed or allowed to perish; that is more than the entire human population of the earth has been for most of our history," said the Crown Prince.

"Not just in the Middle East but all over the world we can observe symptoms of the fear of peace, and the fear of the future," added Prince Hassan.

Prince Hassan referred to poverty and said: "The gap between rich and poor is wider than ever. One fifth of the world's population now lives in extreme poverty while almost a third of our children are under-nourished and yet development is impeded by 'donor fatigue'."

Referring to the late Bailey, Prince Hassan said: "His knowledge of constitutional and international institutions and issues was unmatched in what many regard as his greatest work (How Wars End). Bailey established connections between armed conflicts and human rights issues which had never been made before."

He quoted Bailey: "Reconciliation is not about ideologies or beliefs but about people. Their relationship and response to God, and their relationship to each other."

Prince Hassan concluded by saying: "In ideas such as these lie our best hopes for peace in the new millennium."

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U.S. economy enters seventh year of consecutive growth

NEW YORK (AFP) — The U.S. economy is beginning its seventh consecutive year of expansion this month in what some economists are calling best conditions since the 1960s.

According to the forecasting group DRI/McGraw-Hill, not since 1965 has the United States known a similar combination of growth and low inflation.

The economic upswing following the end of the recession in March 1991 is now the third longest in postwar years and has created 12 million jobs. So far most analysts say the expansion shows no sign of slowing or self-destructing.

"The U.S. is still in its best fundamental shape in 25 years. Never has inflation been so low at such an advanced stage of a business cycle," said Donald Straszheim, economist at brokerage firm Merrill Lynch.

Federal Reserve Vice Chairman Alice Rivlin recently described conditions as "remarkably favourable".

Six years of progress have allowed the United States to turn the page on a long spell of inflation and budgetary drift which followed the Vietnam war, the freeing of exchange rates and

two oil crises.

The return to 1960s-style growth takes various forms but includes negligible unit labour costs rises in manufacturing, thanks to moderate salary increases and gains in productivity.

The tight grip on inflation explains in part the spectacular surge on Wall Street, where stock prices have been driven up on real company performance — profits have doubled in six years — rather than speculation, analysts say.

Investors have rediscovered their appetite for stocks, investing \$222 billion in equity mutual funds last year.

Some economists believe the U.S. economy, deregulated, restructured and competitive, has finally shaken off the boom-and-bust cycle.

They attribute this to the Federal Reserve's monetary policy: the reduction of the budget deficit to its lowest percentage level since 1974; the adaptability and innovation of U.S. businesses; the U.S. lead in the technological revolution; and the globalisation of U.S. capitalism.

Mr. Straszheim, among others, believes the party will not go on forever. "Expansions don't die of

old age. They die of diseases — of imbalances," he said. "We don't see the makings of the next downturn yet. But eventually, overheating will be the likely culprit."

Mr. Rivlin warned of the dangers of inflation, saying "you should be vigilant against the start of inflationary pressures and the Federal Reserve (Fed) is indeed vigilant. That is the stance we are in now."

Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan, testifying before Congress last week, warned that the economy was "clearly running very close to capacity."

Some economists see the Fed boosting interest rates by a quarter-point before mid-year to avert any upcoming inflationary pressures and preserve the slow growth scenario.

Others including former labour secretary Robert Reich and management guru Peter Drucker see problems in the growing inequality of income, with the "haves" reaping the benefits of the expansion at the expense of the "have-nots."

"Left unchecked, it could undermine the stability and moral authority of the nation," said Mr. Reich.

Saudi economy set to perform well in '97

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's oil-reliant economy is expected to perform well in 1997 with crude prices forecast to remain strong and the government set to keep spending high, experts have said.

But the gross domestic product (GDP) of the world's oil superpower will probably not increase as much as it did in 1996 when oil prices surged by more than \$3 a barrel over the previous year, the experts said.

Henry Azzam, chief economist at the Saudi National Commercial Bank, predicted in the United Arab Emirates daily Al Khaleej growth of around three per cent in current prices in 1997, compared to finance ministry figures of 8.6 per cent in 1996 and 4.3 per cent in 1995.

He said the price of North Sea Brent crude was expected to remain as high as \$30 in 1997, slightly lower than the 1996 average of \$20.7.

"The oil sector is not expected to record any growth this year but the expansionist budget will support positive growth in the government sector, which will grow by around six per cent compared with 8.2 per cent in 1996," Mr. Azzam wrote.

"The private sector is also expected to extend the gains it attained in the last quarter of 1996 with a growth of around 4.2 per cent. There are several factors that support this trend, including strong oil prices, the higher budget, an increase in liquidity and an improvement in the Saudi rial," he indicated.

Saudi Arabia forecast expenditure of 181 billion riyals (\$48.2 billion) in 1997 compared with a forecast expenditure of \$40 billion in 1996.

"Oil prices are expected to be high this year because of the growth in demand, but I don't think they will be as strong as last year," said Mohammad Al Asumi, chief economist at the state-controlled Emirates Industrial Bank.

Nevertheless, "this will have a positive impact on the economy of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries in terms of growth rates, budgets and trade balance," he added.

Mr. Azzam's figures showed Saudi Arabia's GDP would rise to \$25 billion riyals (\$140 billion) in 1997 from \$09.7 billion riyals (\$135.9 billion) in 1996.

According to these figures, the oil sector's share of the GDP will probably retreat to 36.2 per cent from 37.3 per cent while the non-

oil sector will rise to 63.8 per cent from 62.7 per cent. During the oil boom of late 1970s and early 1980s, the oil sector dominated the GDP.

"The Saudi economy entered a new stage of growth in 1996, and it is expected to continue this year," Mr. Azzam said.

"The more than expected increase in oil prices last year did not only positively affect the kingdom's income and current account, but enabled the government to carry out an expansionist financial policy that contributed to achieving high growth rates in the non-oil

sectors," he added.

Mr. Azzam was referring to a sharp increase in Riyadh's actual expenditure over its projected level in 1996 due to the surge in crude prices. The bulk of the increase was used to pay arrears to local contractors and farmers.

Meanwhile, experts said Saudi Arabia will likely miss a target it set for 2000 to wipe out a persistent budget deficit because of heavy defence spending and slow reforms.

"Every time we say the deficit will be negligible or eliminated, we find that it is still there at the end of the

year. This is because the government apparently cannot put the brakes on spending," a Saudi banker said.

"From the pattern of spending over the past few years, I think the gap between revenue and expenditure will stay in the next years. The Saudis appear unable to cut defence spending and the reforms are moving like a lame duck," he added.

Economists had expected the actual Saudi budget shortfall to disappear at the end of 1996 because of the surge in crude oil prices but it was only cut by around \$400 million to \$4.5 billion.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study your status in the outside world today and plan how to improve it with whatever details you will need to apply. You can make the days ahead brighter for your loved ones through the efforts you expend.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Add more charm and beauty today in both your career activities and your environment so that you can make all of your efforts more successful. People cooperate if you wear a smile, so give them a happy grin whenever possible.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get into the amusements you like the most today and have a happy time in the pursuit of these activities. Be careful in motion especially on the highway, thereby you can avoid getting into any difficulties with other people.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Do whatever will bring more harmony within your home today so that you can be happier there, especially with your loved ones around. Later this evening you can get together with fellow associates and devise a course of action.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan how to have more harmony today with persons who are important in your daily routines for you to become quite successful. Make important visits to see those people who you have not encountered for sometime.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make the right financial contact today and improve your monetary status so that you can have extra funds for a rainy day. Dress nicely for best result in your career activities, since someone who looks successful will be successful.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You are charming and dynamic today, so see as many persons as you can to assist you in finding happiness, whether it be in business activities or your personal life. Later this evening will be good to go out on the town with mate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Show more affection for your mate today and be romantically happy by doing something special for him or her. Go after data later this evening you need for success and you will gain it through the efforts of a bigwig.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Take some time away from practical matters today and enjoy the company of good friends to relieve tension and relax from all of your stressful business activities. This evening will be good to meet with good friends for some fun.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Keep busy today at improving your prestige and credit and thereby you will gain the recognition you see from those in authority. A kind person of importance gives you added support for completing any project which is current.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Find the right way today to entertain persons you like and make your efforts more productive. Plan a trip which has long been on your mind and determine the best method of operation to make it successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Try to be with fine personalities you like and maintain a good rapport with them. Make your relationship more romantic with your mate by showing him or her some extra affection or doing something special which is appreciated.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Pakistan builds up reserves

KARACHI (AFP) — Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have climbed to \$850 million since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged citizens to hand over their hard currency, central bank sources said.

Foreign exchange reserves were up from \$590 million when the Benazir Bhutto government was dismissed in November and \$690 million when Mr. Sharif took office, they said.

"Sharif's policies have evoked an enthusiastic response from Pakistanis inside and outside the country and the business community," said an official at the State Bank of Pakistan.

The premier made an appeal to Pakistani citizens last month for donations or time deposits in foreign currency to help the govern-

ment reduce its foreign debt burden estimated at around \$30 billion.

Pakistan is to retire approximately \$1 billion debt by September this year, official sources said.

"The flow of foreign currency deposits has shown a steady increase," the official said.

Under procedures announced by the central bank, Pakistani citizens can extend to the government \$1,000 each as an interest-free two-to-five year loan or deposit the amount in a bank account for at least two years.

Those not ready to forgo interest will be paid profit quarterly at rates ranging between 7.50 per cent and 9.0 per cent depending on the duration of the deposits. Private businesses and

people from all walks of life, including the armed forces, have announced donations for the fund.

The Pakistani business community in the Gulf state of Dubai has promised at least \$50 million in donations and deposits, sources said.

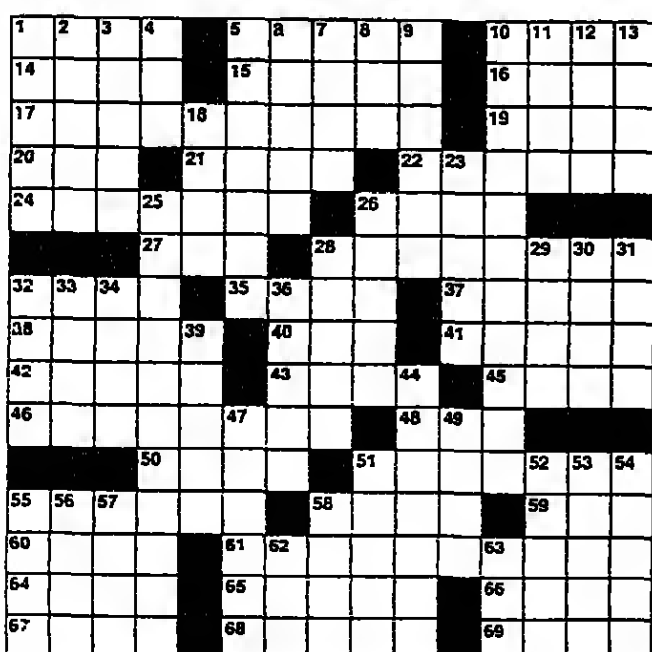
Businessmen in Pakistan's capital, Karachi, plan to raise \$250 million, the president of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shahzad Alam, said.

Mr. Alam said the foreign exchange reserves would exceed \$1.25 billion before the budget, due in June.

Workers in government and private establishments have donated a day's salary while the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) has contributed nearly \$500,000.

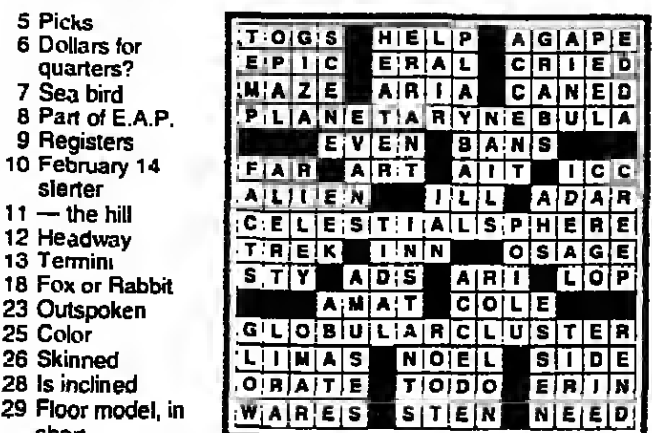
THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
1 Alphabet run
5 Suzette head
10 Traveled
14 Caid game word
15 Long-necked bird
16 Range area
17 Scot
19 Delight or thrill
20 Popular name for a street
21 Memory
22 Turns inside out
24 Curb
26 Expens
27 It's out of its name
28 Picturesque waterfalls
32 Do in
35 Box
37 Sphere of action
38 Fountain drinks
40 Intense anger
41 Dud
42 Teen follower
43 Sparks and Beatty
45 Function
46 Teapot contents?
48 Emesto
50 Les Etats —
51 Showy things
55 Lady in charge
58 Biddies
59 Be sorry
60 Above all
61 Novices
64 Whimpering cry
65 Occupation contract
66 Eating holder
67 Henry's fourth
68 Chemical compound
69 Prohibitionists



by Mary Derderian Brown

- DOWN
1 — waeve of grain
2 Ball beauty
3 Bush group
4 Presidential monogram
5 Picks
6 Dollars for quarters?
7 Sea bird
8 Part of E.A.P.
9 Registers
10 February 14 sloter
11 — the hill
12 Headway
13 Termini
18 Fox or Rabbit
23 Outspoken
25 Color
26 Skinned
28 Is inclined
29 Floor model, in short
30 Chemical compound
31 Reasonable
32 Singing style
33 Star or stone start
34 Astirgent
36 Quart makers
39 Pool person
44 Supermarket aid
47 One alone
49 — money (bribe)
51 Water birds
52 Baseball goof
53 Pass, as in a race
54 Affirmatives
55 Family member
56 Egyptian god
57 Urban place
58 Pressure
62 — judicata
63 Ancient



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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Swiss bank delegation starts visit today

AMMAN (J.T.) — A high-ranking delegation representing Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) will start a short visit to Jordan today, according to source at the Amman Financial Market (AFM).

During the visit, organised by the AFM, the delegation members will meet with senior government officials as well as private sector representatives.

UBS is Switzerland's strongest bank and one of three banks world-wide that retain an AAA credit rating. It is a major player in the global financial services market, coordinator in initial public offerings and leading equity underwriter in global primary markets.

Jewellers sell more gold, investors buy less — WGC

LONDON (R) — Gold jewellery demand reached a new record last year but interest in the metal as an investment waned, according to figures published by the World Gold Council (WGC).

About 2,242 tonnes of gold jewellery were purchased last year compared with 2,231 tonnes in 1995.

But investors settled for only 322 tonnes last year, a decline of 25 per cent from 432 tonnes the previous year.

Overall consumption fell 102 tonnes to 2,642 tonnes in the countries monitored by the WGC which account for about three quarters of total world demand.

Much of Latin America and former Soviet Bloc countries are not monitored by the council, a producer-sponsored agency.

George Milling-Stanley, WGC manager for gold market analysis, denied that the decline in investor demand was an indication of gold losing its role as an investment asset.

"This is not indicative of a longer term trend. Demand last year was a logical response to bizarre movements in exchange rates," he said.

Japan, Germany and Austria all benefited from favourable exchange rates which meant the gold price was at an 18-year low in Japan and a 12-year low in marks.

"In 1996, investment demand has fallen back to more normal levels commensurate with early 1990s and late 1980s," Mr. Milling-Stanley said.

Overall gold consumption was down only four per cent on the 1995 record level.

"Gold demand in 1996 remained very close to the previous year's record high level, in spite of a drop in investment demand. The overall 1996 performance is a testament to the strength of jewellery demand," the WGC said.

Jewellery consumption totalled 2,242 tonnes just above the record set the year before and remained robust in early 1997, the WGC said.

Gold demand increased in the Middle East and the developing markets of Asia and Latin America as well as in the U.S. and Europe.

But demand in Japan fell 41 per cent against 1995 — largely reflecting the decline in investor interest.

Gold devotees in India, the world's largest importer of the yellow metal, bought over 500 tonnes for the first time as they raised purchases by six per cent over 1995.

Mr. Milling-Stanley noted that high Indian demand was continuing into 1997.

A key factor was the recent liberalisation programme by the Indian government that allowed non-resident Indians to bring home up to 10 kilograms of gold every six months.

This had created singular problems for airlines.

Gold insurance limits have been reached by flight operators from

Europe where gold is cast into the small bars favoured by hoarders in the Indian sub-continent to Dubai the main "retailer" to India's gold craving public.

Flights from Dubai are having to impose safety weight limits on the amount of gold being shipped home by returning Indian workers.

Not surprisingly Dubai is currently reporting its highest ever import figures, said Mr. Milling-Stanley.

However, gold demand in China, once the great hope for ever increasing consumption declined by seven per cent to 371.40 tonnes.

Part of the reason was the increasing demand

put on the more affluent population's disposable income as the government provided fewer services than in its hard-line communist days.

"After the death of Deng (Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping) it is possible to see continuing liberalisation of the socio-political environment," said Mr. Milling-Stanley.

"But you may also see more liberalisation of the gold market which could help to offset that decline (in consumer spending)," he added.

Liberalisation of gold trading in India had doubled demand in five years and more recent easing of controls in Indonesia had also vast-

ly increased gold consumption.

China's 5,000 state-run gold retail stores each had to serve 2.5 million people compared with one gold outlet per 7,000 people in Hong Kong, Mr. Milling-Stanley said.

"More retail stores would help (in China). But deregulation can be a double edged sword as it can give people access to lots of other than gold," he said.

The WGC which is sponsored by several major mining companies to promote gold consumption monitors areas accounting for about 75 per cent of world gold demand.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Toujan wants privatisation process stopped as she sees beneficiaries being opportunists, capitalists

"I DO not approve of selling a pebble of the earth under the authority of current government and in light of the weakness of the Lower House which is enacting many laws to serve the interests of some individual opportunists and capitalists," said Deputy Toujan Faisal voicing her opposition to the privatisation policy followed by the government.

"Speeding up the privatisation process means quickening theft in the lost time before democracy holds and accountability," she added.

The deputy said privatisation should be started with losing companies as the profitable ones are often sold to certain individuals at terms tailored to fit a specified group although, on the face of it, the terms seem to be general conditions. She stressed that the companies to be privatised should be studied carefully in order to improve their situation and to hold the heads of those firms accountable for their failures. Such studies, Ms. Faisal indicated, should also ensure that the value of the companies is not underestimated when they are sold so as not to harm the public interest and not to cause any loss for the treasury.

Ms. Faisal called for formulating a special law to become the base and main foundation to the privatisation process, especially as it involves large amounts that should not be "played with" without controls. She wanted the law to be drafted by an expanded economic committee that would represent all public sectors and all the qualified economists from the private sector.

She emphasised "total support for the private sector to play its full role" and highlighted that the private sector initiatives have always been better than those of the public sector. "However, this should not mean the absence of controls and should not mean keeping the privatisation arrangements," the deputy stressed.

Ms. Faisal said that the success of the large government companies, such as the potash, cement and phosphate, cannot be guaranteed because these companies have no competitors in the Jordanian market. "If we compare these firms with similar ones in neighbouring countries we will find that their success relative and limited," she added.

Demanding that the ongoing privatisation process be stopped until "we have a Lower House that is qualified and democratic (not elected according to a one vote system)," Ms. Faisal said the Jordanian economy has not been rehabilitated in the right form over the past years because it was based on "government deals and protection serving certain people."

She added: "Rehabilitating the private sector does not happen by flooding it with exemptions and privileges and opening the borders for smuggling under the pretext of encouraging investments." Furthermore, encouraging investments does not mean not giving protection to our products and industries, she said (Al Dustour).

Hong Kong tops list of most expensive office market

HONG KONG (AFP) — The outlook for office markets this year in Hong Kong, the Philippines and Singapore is favourable, a report has said. In its latest report, Marlin Land Ltd. said prices of prime office rents in Hong Kong averaged \$88 per 0.09 square metre per annum, compared to \$58 in Singapore and \$35 in the Philippines.

In Beijing, prime office rents hover around \$55 per annum, while Shanghai stands at \$50, and the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou at \$25.

In Kuala Lumpur, average prime office rent was \$25, in Bangkok, around \$23, and \$17 in Jakarta.

However, Ruyee How, Marlin Land's group executive director, said the outlook for the Hong Kong, Philippines and Singapore office sector would remain positive in 1997 due to strong economic performances. But other markets such

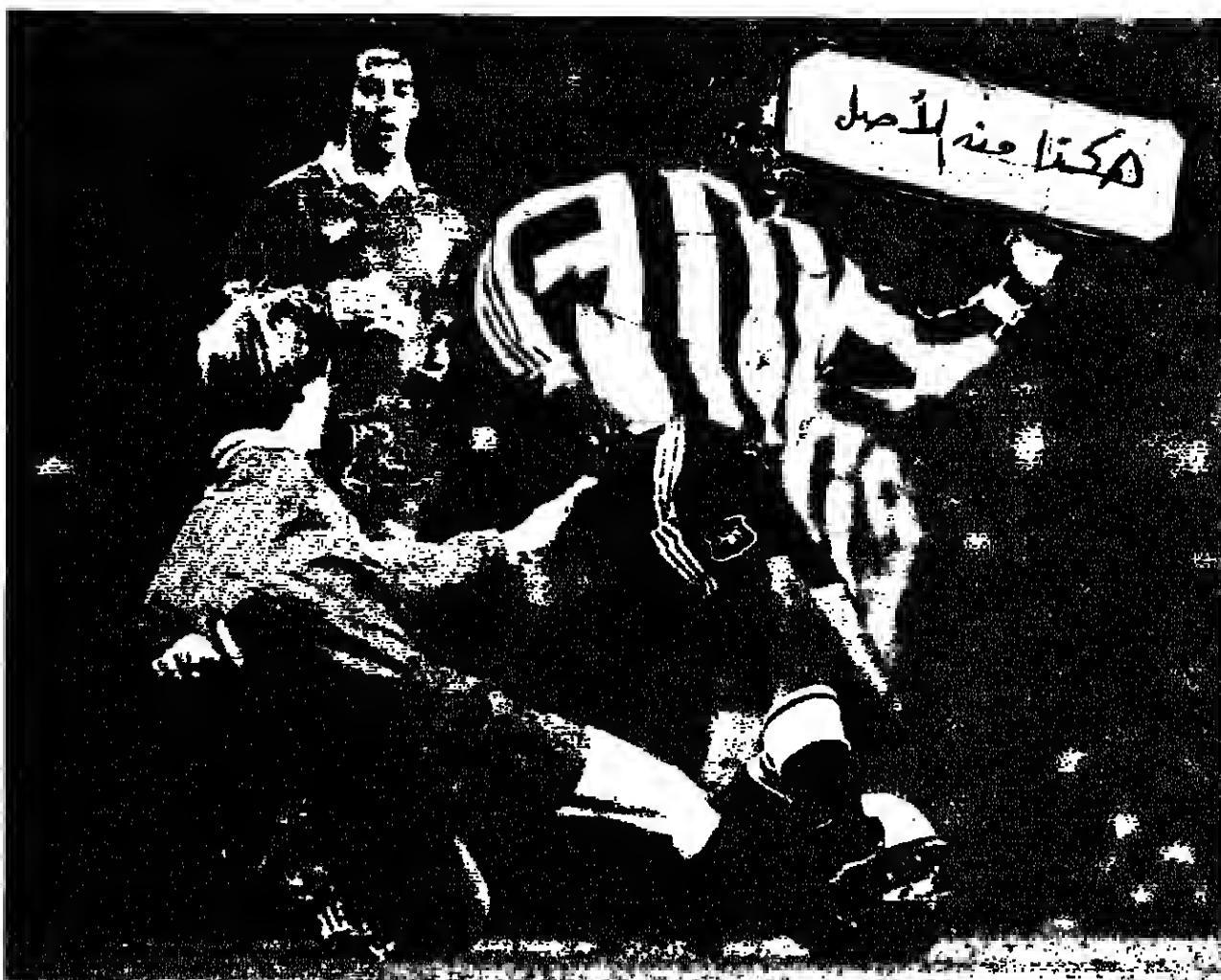
as Jakarta, Bangkok, Shanghai, and Kuala Lumpur, will experience oversupply, exerting great pressure on office prices, rents and capital values.

In Hong Kong, Mr. How said the territory's office market had picked up considerably in the last part of 1996 after dropping 30 per cent in the 15 months after mid-1994.

Due to the country's booming economy, office prices and rentals in Manila have soared by more than 100 per cent over the past two years, particularly in the Makati business district where property values have doubled in less than a year.

Singapore will also see a positive outlook this year because more multinationals are setting up regional offices there as the island shifts away from manufacturing to a more service-based economy.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179 ORGANISED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 11/03/1997												
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / R	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHG. %	TE	
269,000	205,000	ARAB BANK	14.3	1.34	5	320	63840	263.00	262.00	1.00	0.00	
2,100	1,900	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	32	18237	35530	1.94	1.96	0.02	0.00	
1,210	1,080	KID. EAST INV. BK.	67.0	0.00	16	20500	20586	1.03	1.05	0.02	0.00	
5,150	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.4	2.97	5	4500	20955	4.70	4.66	0.01	0.00	
2,980	2,440	JOR. KOWAT BANK	20.0	0.00	3	3045	8402	2.76	2.76	0.00	0.00	
1,090	940	JOR. GULF BANK	5.1	6.14	1	300	258	0.86	0.86	0.00	0.00	
4,120	3,480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.4	0.00	4	450	1726	3.85	3.84	0.01	0.00	
2,910	1,550	BEIT AL-HIL (SEITHA)	9	10.00	2	200	300	1.55	1.50	0.05	0.00	
1,440	1,000	PSIADAL INV. BK.	9	0.00	8	7146	8343	1.17	1.20	0.03	0.00	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS												
2,800	1,830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.53	1	50	95	1.87	1.80	0.03	0.00	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS												
1,830	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PHW.	11.4	7.32	9	4000	9856	1.65	1.64	0.01	0.00	
1,840	1,080	MATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1850	2109	1.14	1.14	0.00	0.00	
1,050	820	REAL ESTATE INV.	22.4	3.69	13	10500	10544	1.00	1.01	0.01	0.00	
3,720	3,130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.0	6.06	3	1200	3963	3.33	3.30	0.03	0.00	
1,220	960	NABA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	1100	1078	0.98	0.98	0.00	0.00	
2,230	1,690	UNITED CO.	8.3	6.29	10	4000	7050	1.79	1.75	0.04	0.00	
1,200	750	TRION LAND DEV.	2	0.00	3	900	700	0.77	0.78	0.01	0.00	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS												
3,730	3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.0	2.86	10	6791	23752	3.49	3.50	0.01	0.00	
3,500	2,710	JOR. PROSPERITY KINES	35.3	0.00	1	550	1804	3.30	3.28	0.02	0.00	
6,300	4,950	ARAB PETRO. CO.	18.5	3.28	9	2710	16524	6.10	6.10	0.00	0.00	
10,400	8,720	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	10.7	7.87	11	1174	11922	10.11	10.17	0.06	0.00	
7,300	6,250	JORDAN TANNING	6.8	5.67	2	325	2064	6.35	6.35	0.00	0.00	
1,590	1,150	MOULIN INDUSTRIES	61.7	0.00	7	11800	16402	1.40	1.39	0.01	0.00	
7,950	6,420	JOR. WORTHER HILLS	8.8	3.62	1	1300	8970	6.90	6.90	0.00	0.00	
4,180	3,040	ARAB PHARM. MANT.	20.6	5.32	7	9350	35155	3.75	3.76	0.01	0.00	
7,250	5,650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.5	3.68	7	375	2551	6.83	6.80	0.03	0.00	
6,700	4,150	DAR ALDANA DV. INV.	13.1	4.17	7	5256	25025	4.79	4.80	0.01	0.00	
1,960	1,450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	31	30700	17744	0.59	0.57	0.02	0.00	
1,100	800	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	7.8	9.01	2	1250	1438	1.16	1.15	0.01	0.00	
1,020	540	NATIONAL INSUR.	9.5	9.38	8	2950	2528	0.64	0.64	0.00	0.00	
1,540	930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	2	1000	990	1.00	0.99	0.01	0.00	
1,670	1,080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.3	0.00	10	2300	3377	1.49	1.46	0.03	0.00	
2,750	1,440	UNIV. MED. IND.	5.1	11.98	3	1050	1761	1.69	1.67	0.02	0.00	
1,820	1,140	JOR. INFO. RESOURCES	15.7	0.00	7	2500	3133	1.34	1.33	0.01	0.00	
1,270	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	23.9	0.00	20	8500	7541	0.90	0.88	0.02	0.00	
2,400	1,750	EL. & RAY READY WEAR	7	0.00	3	484	884	1.84	1.83	0.01	0.00	
1,360	1,080	THE TOWERS	27.5	0.00	5	2200	2974	1.17	1.17	0.00	0.00	
1,470	930	UNION CH. & VEG.	23.9	0.00	6	2730	2673	0.98	0.97	0.01	0.00	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS												
31,800	21,510		318.51	0.00	163	96318	189085					
GRAND TOTAL												
31,800	21,510		318.51	0.00	163	96318	189085					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 11/03/1997												
790	500	JOR. TRADE FAC.	13.3	0.00	9	12000	6000	0.51	0.50	0.01	0.00	
950	550	JOR. FIM. INV. CO. 75%	2	0.00	1	10000	6500	0.95	0.90	0.05	0.00	
850	550	UNION INV. 50%	67.0	0.00	1	200	40	0.70	0.70	0.00	0.00	
840	370	ARAB FIM. INVEST.	9	0.00	21	43000	17653	0.43	0.41	0.02	0.00	
950	640	AL-DARWISH 75%	14.9	0.00	1	300	121	0.65	0.65	0.00	0.00	
640	200	JOR. INDUS. MATS. JENDO	0	0.00	3	8000	1760	0.22	0.22	0.00	0.00	
740	510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	0	0.00	5	2650	2124	0.60	0.59	0.01	0.00	
1,690	1,380	WALL. CLOTHING	0	0.00	9	10050	13990	1.39	1.38	0.01	0.00	
690	440	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	0	0.00	4	4750	2138	0.46	0.45	0.01	0.00	
810	510	SELT. TEXTILE	0	0.00	4	1950	997	0.54	0.51	0.03	0.00	
850	400	NATL. MOUT. WIG. MAKING	0	0.00	19	32600	14018	0.44	0.43	0.01	0.00	
660	430	SAVIAN OTEX HOTELS	0	0.00	7	8950	4230	0.61	0.61	0.00	0.00	
990	720	JORDAN STEEL	0	0.00	6	15250	11435	0.75	0.75	0.00	0.00	
700	430	ARAB ELECT. IND.	0	0.00	1	10000	5100	0.51	0.51	0.00	0.00	
750	400	KIDEST TRADING 75%	0	0.00	1	1750	630	0.61	0.61	0.00	0.00	
1,130	570	UNION TOWARDS 75%	0	0.00	3	700	504	1.00	0.97	0.03	0.00	
770	570	KAL. FARM. 65%	0	0.00	1	500	120	0.60	0.59	0.01	0.00	
1,480	990	IND. INV.	26.8	0.00	7	1500	3225	0.44	0.43	0.01	0.00	
1,140	780	IND. CERAMIC	0	0.00	1	2000	1600	0.80	0.80	0.00	0.00	
950	530	KID. EAST COMPLEX	6.6	0.00	87	197850	144012	0.70	0.73	0.03	0.00	
GRAND TOTAL												
31,800	21,510		318.51	0.00	163	969000	236197					
* New 12 months low * Limited during the past 12 months * P/R ratio is 100 or more * Negative P/R * Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year												



Newcastle United's Colombian soccer star Faustino Asprilla (R) is tackled by Liverpool's Norwegian star Bjorn Tore Kvarme (L), as teammate Jamie Redknapp (C) moves in during their FA Carling Premiership match at Anfield (Reuters photo)

Liverpool win as Fowler settles Anfield thriller

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — Liverpool moved to within one point of Manchester United at the top of the English Premiership with a stunning 4-3 win over Kenny Dalglish's Newcastle on Monday.

Fowler sealed one of the most dramatic Premiership encounters of recent years with virtually the last touch of the match when he headed in Stig Bjornehye's cross from the left.

His 25th goal of the season came at the end of an extraordinary night in which Liverpool had gone three goals up in the first half before Newcastle stunned them to level the scores with just one minute to go.

In the end, it was an unhappy return for Dalglish to the club where he was idolised as a player and a manager with the scoreline showing a remarkable repeat of the corresponding fixture of last season's game.

The Newcastle boss could only watch as his side were rocked by first half goals from Steve McManaman, Patrick Berger and Robbie Fowler.

And just when he thought his side had pulled off one of the most remarkable comebacks in living memory through goals from Keith Gillespie, Faustino Asprilla and Warren Barton, Fowler struck to send the home fans into a mad frenzy of celebration.

The win lifted Roy Evans' side back above Arsenal and into second position where they are just one point behind United, who had

slumped to a shock 2-1 defeat at Sunderland on Saturday.

Until the 29th minute, Dalglish's side — still without injured striker Alan Shearer — had absorbed Liverpool's attacks without serious alarm.

But in a devastating 70 seconds, Newcastle were virtually down and out as Liverpool hit them with two superb goals.

The first involved a slick build-up down the right before Jason McAteer delivered a low ball across the Newcastle box.

Fowler dummied to shoot allowing the ball to roll to McManaman who controlled the ball before bending it into the top left hand corner of Shaka Hislop's goal for his first goal in 14 league games.

The Liverpool fans were still in mid-celebration when their team hit Dalglish's shell-shocked side for a second.

McManaman disposed David Batty near the centre circle before bearing down on goal and releasing Fowler whose shot cannoned off the right hand post for Czech star Berger who simply slotted the ball into the back of the net.

Five minutes from the interval, Fowler appeared to have killed off any lingering hopes of a Newcastle fight-back with his 24th goal of the season.

Only three players were involved in a sweeping move from one end of the pitch to the other as

Norwegian full-back Bjorn Kvarme found Jamie Redknapp wide on the right

with a 40-yard cross field pass.

England midfielder Redknapp looked up before releasing Fowler with his own searching pass which allowed the Liverpool striker to finish coolly with a chip over the sprawling Hislop.

For one Newcastle fan, the unfolding rout was too much to bear and he ran down the touchline and tossed his shirt at manager Dalglish in the Newcastle dugout.

Dalglish, though, was lucky not to see the scoreline doubled as wave after wave of Liverpool attack crashed in on his beleaguered defence in the quarter of an hour after the break.

Fowler twice went close. Berger headed inches wide. John Barnes grazed a post. Stig Bjornehye forced a smart low save out of Hislop and McAteer twice blazed over with powerful drives.

But Newcastle, whose frustrations were reflected in an ugly challenge on McManaman by Batty who was booked for his indiscretion, crept back into the game when Gillespie's speculative shot from outside the area bobbed into the back of the net after a mistake by keeper David James.

It appeared no more than a consolation, but with three minutes left on the clock Asprilla gave Newcastle faint hopes of a result with his first league goal since the 4-3 defeat to Liverpool in April last year.

The Colombian lifted the ball over James with a superb lob on the run after

being brilliantly found by substitute David Ginola.

And within two minutes, Newcastle silenced the home crowd when Barton capitalised on some chaos in the Newcastle area when he nudged the ball under James from close range.

But as the Newcastle fans celebrated, Norwegian Bjornehye burst down the left and fired over a cross which Fowler threw his head at the ball to secure a dramatic victory.

"If we want to win the league, we have got to win games at Anfield and over the last few games we have not been doing that," said Liverpool hero Fowler.

"When it was 3-3 I thought 'that's it' — but we got another goal and that puts us back in the title race."

The Anfield striker refused to rule Newcastle out of the title chase despite Monday's result.

"There's a lot of games to go and you don't know what's going to happen," he said.

"Man-of-the-match" McManaman could hardly believe his eyes when Barton scored Newcastle's equaliser.

"I think it was down to our mistakes really — a few silly mistakes, a few stray balls," he said.

"We were controlling the second-half but then, with 15 minutes left, our passing became a little bit sloppy. We are upset really because we had the game won with 20 minutes to go."

Field of 64 set for NCAA tourney

NEW YORK (R) — Top-ranked Kansas, defending champions Kentucky, North Carolina and Minnesota were installed as regional top seeds as the field of 64 for the 59th NCAA College Basketball Tournament was announced at the weekend.

Kansas (32-1), which won the big 12 conference tournament, was named top seed in the Southeast Region.

North Carolina (24-6), winner of the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament, finished over upset-minded N.C. State, was placed atop the East Region.

Minnesota (27-3), despite Saturday's loss at Wisconsin, was given the top seed in the Midwest Region, while the NCAA champion Wildcats (30-4), who wrapped up the Southeastern Conference title were awarded number one in the West.

Kentucky bumped Utah out of the top seed in the West despite the fact the Utes have been ranked in the top 10 all season and won the Western Athletic Conference regular-season title and conference tournament.

The Kansas Jayhawks, who have been No. 1 since early December, will face Jackson State (14-15) Thursday in Memphis, Tennessee as "March madness" gets underway.

Kansas will attempt to become the second team in three seasons to win the NCAA tournament as the nation's top-ranked team, UCLA accomplished the feat in 1995.

Kansas enters the tournament riding a 10-game winning streak since its lone loss to Missouri. They have avenged that defeat twice since, including Sunday's 87-60 thrashing in the big "first round" tournament final.

North Carolina enters the tournament as one of the hottest teams in the nation.

The tar heels, who won their final 12 games after an 80-73 setback at Duke on January 29, will play Fairfield (11-18) in the first round Thursday at Winston-Salem.

The game will hold special significance for North Carolina coach Dean Smith, who needs one win to tie the legendary Adolph Rupp of Kentucky for most wins by a Division I coach. Smith picked up his 875th victory in the ACC tournament final.

Fairfield, which has the worst record in the field of 64, captured the automatic bid from the metro Atlantic Athletic Conference by winning its tournament as an eighth seed.

Minnesota rolled to the big ten conference title, posting a 16-2 record in one of the tougher conferences in the nation. Saturday's one-point loss at Wisconsin clearly failed to lessen the Gophers' standing in the eyes of the tournament committee that decided the seedings.

Minnesota, heading a group of six big ten teams in the field of 64, opens against Southwest Texas state (16-12) on Friday in Kansas City.

Southwest Texas State got to the big dance by capturing the Southland conference tournament title.

Despite awarding Kentucky a top seed, the selection committee did not give the Wildcats a free ride to the final four, putting up two potentially huge road blocks in the West Region in second seed Utah and third seed Wake Forest.

Kentucky will face Montana (21-10) in the first round Thursday in Salt Lake City.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Tired Radulescu pays price of success

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Alex Radulescu, a semi-finalist in Rotterdam at the weekend, paid the price for that success by crashing in the first round of the ATP tournament here Monday. The fourth-seeded German, clearly jaded after his run of matches in the Netherlands, went down 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 to Jan Krosiak of the Slovak Republic. Radulescu's third-seeded compatriot David Prinosil beat Frenchman Thierry Champion. Other winners were Thomas Johansson of Sweden, Karol Kucera of the Slovak republic and Nuno Marques of Portugal.

Melinte scores hammer record

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Romania's Mihaela Melinte set a new women's hammer world record of 69.58 metres, beating her own previous mark of 69.42m set on May 12, 1996, the Rompres news agency reported. Melinte set the new mark at Saturday's Romanian national athletics championships.

Dichio still set on move

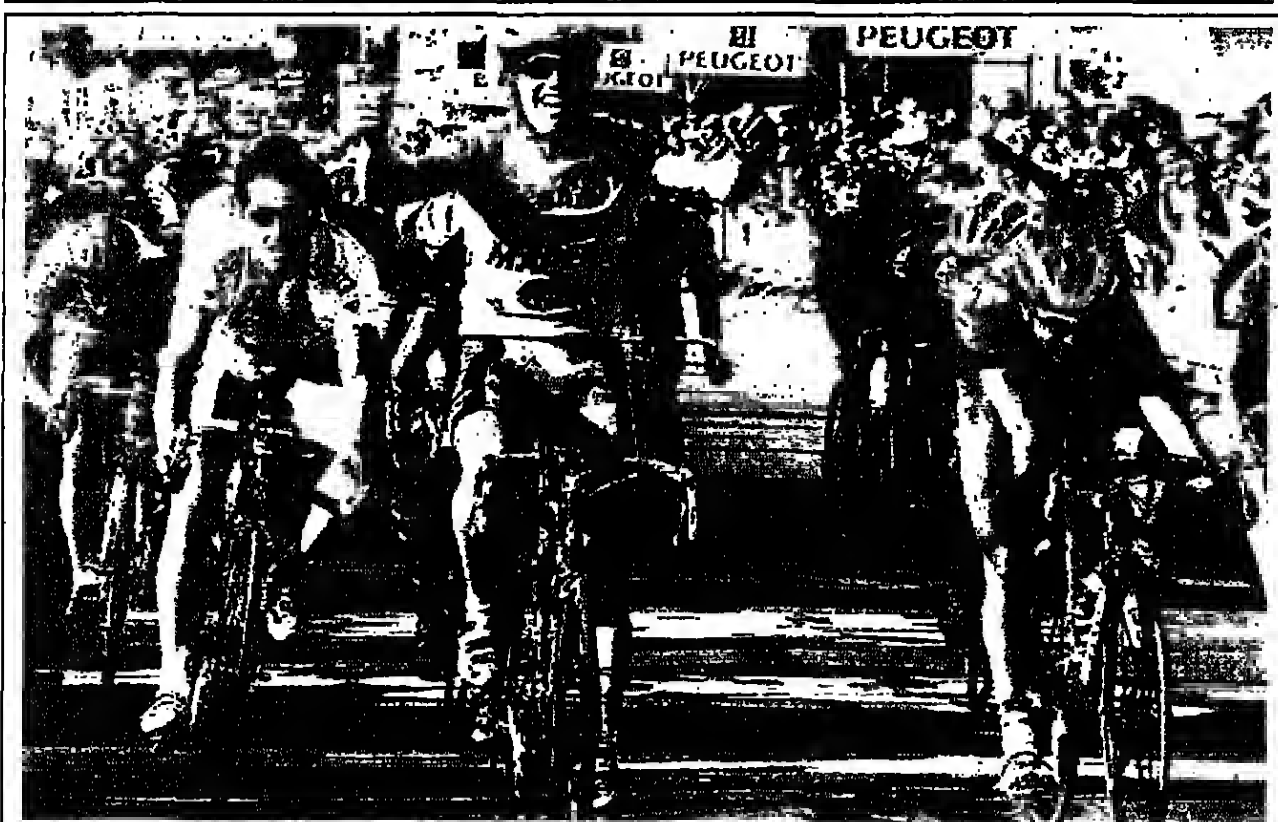
LONDON (AFP) — Daniele Dichio said Tuesday he still had his heart set on leaving QPR at the end of the season, despite turning down the chance to join high-flying Wimbledon. "A move to Wimbledon was not right for my career at this stage but I am a free agent in the summer and would look at any opportunity to play abroad," Dichio explained. "It is the first time rangers have given me the chance to talk to another club and I hope it alerts people to the fact that they would let me go." Rangers boss Stewart Houston confirmed the First Division club had agreed to accept Wimbledon's offer, believed to be in the region of 1 million pounds, if Dichio could settle personal terms with them.

NBA fines Gilliam for flagrant foul

NEW YORK (R) — The NBA Monday fined Milwaukee Bucks centre Armon Gilliam \$7,500 for committing a flagrant foul against Cleveland's Bob Sura in a game on Saturday. Gilliam, who is averaging 8.6 points per game and 6.7 rebounds this season, fouled Sura with 11:00 remaining in the second quarter of Milwaukee's 90-82 victory Saturday. Gilliam was immediately ejected from the game. The ejection also carries an automatic \$1,000 fine.

NFL attendance down

NEW YORK (R) — Attendance in the National Football League in 1996 was down by nearly 600,000 fans from the year before, the NFL said on Monday. The NFL said total paid attendance for the 1996 season was 18,648,981, a drop of almost 600,000 from 1995's record total of 19,202,757, but still the second highest total in the league's 77-year history. The regular-season total of 14,612,417 for the 1996 season, an average of 60,885 per game, was also the second highest behind 1995's total of 15,043,562. For the third consecutive season, the Kansas City Chiefs led the NFL in regular-season home attendance with an eight-game total of 628,460.



Belgium's Tom Steels (C) holds up his arms as he wins the third stage of the Paris-Nice cycling race between Bourges and Montlucon (173 Km). Steels won ahead of Italy's Gian Matteo Fagnini (R) and France's Frederic Moncassin (R). France's Laurent Jalabert retains his leader's jersey (Reuters photo)

Russia's promoted 'tyre men' face bumpy ride in Premier League

YAROSLAVL, Russia (R) — The ice is beginning to thaw at Yaroslavl's Shinnik Stadium and the Russian Premier League's provincial new recruits are bracing for the start of the 1997 season with a mixture of hope and trepidation.

Their hope springs eternal. Their trepidation is that avoiding an early exit from a division dominated by relatively monied sides from Moscow is no pushover for the local tyre works side among the poorest in the top flight.

"The main thing is for us to hang on

to our place in the top division," Shinnik chairman Valery Frolov told reporters in his office in Yaroslavl, 260 km north of the capital. "We live in hope and will do our best but it won't be easy."

Outside, the unroofed stadium needs a lick of paint, a new scoreboard, and new seats although average attendance at the 24,000-seater ground last year was 5,000.

Sunday's opening fixture against Torpedo-Luzhnik from Moscow will usher in only Shinnik's third season in top flight football, just as the club

founded by the local Shinnik (tyre-maker) tyre factory, celebrates its 40th anniversary. The 1963 and 1992 "promotion" seasons ended with instant relegation.

Yaroslavl, an ancient city of onion-domed buildings on the Northern Volga, is not unused to sporting success but, fittingly for its climate, it has always come in the shape of torpedo Yaroslavl ice hockey club.

Frolov, who played up front for Spartak Moscow in the 1970s, knows life will be tough against Moscow's big teams.

The Shinnik plant, like most Russian industry, is in deep trouble. Yaroslavl governor Anatoly Lisitsyn bankrolled the team to the runners-up spot in last year's First Division but his resources pale in comparison to what Moscow city council could call on to bail out Torpedo from the bankrupt Zil car plant.

Shinnik coach Anatoly Polosin's share of an annual club budget of 10 billion roubles (\$1.8 million) — about enough to buy Alan Shearer's left foot — does not go far.

Promotion is costing Yaroslavl a

hefty \$200,000 in undersoil heating. Their failure to install it before now means they will play Sunday's "home" fixture against Torpedo 1,500 km to the south in Krasnodar.

Frolov says he has no choice but to pay up. If Shinnik has no heating by the time the ice returns to the Volga at the end of September they will be docked six points — which Frolov reckons could spell the end of their third spell in the Premier League.

Offering bonuses, he has set the team the task of finishing in the top 10 in the 18-club Premier League.

There is little room for mistakes. Frolov admits Russian soccer is half a dozen top clubs and the rest. Next year's Premier League will be cut to 16 teams and could shrink further.

So, wary of comparison with Rotor Volgograd and 1995 champions Alania Vladikavkaz, the only provincials to threaten Moscow's grip on the post-soviet league, Frolov is a realist.

"All the leading clubs can lose points and lose games," he said. "The more they lose, the better for Russian football."

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "1"
Eddie Murphy, Jada Pinkett & James Coburn..... in
THE NUTTY PROFESSOR
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "2"
David Caruso, Kathryn Erbe, Helen Hunt, & Samuel Jackson ...in
KISS OF DEATH
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238
PLAZA
Adel Imam, Shireen & Saeed Saleh.
Bakhit Wa Adilah (2)
Al Jardal Walkankah.
Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
CURT RUSSEL & STEVEN SEGAL...IN
EXECUTIVE DECISION
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
Michael Jordan ...in
SPACEJAM
Shows: 3:30, 6:00

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155
THE THEATRE WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL MARCH 1 FOR MAINTENANCE & REDECORATION WE WILL BE BACK WITH Aman.. Ya Ho



The Kingdom's national soccer team

Jordan beats Oman 4-1

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S NATIONAL SOCCER team Tuesday scored a 4-1 win over Oman concluding their training camp in Muscat in preparation for the Asian World Cup qualifiers next month.

The match was an opportunity for the team's head coach to finalise the lineup with less than a month remaining for the kick-off of the Group 3 qualifiers against Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Before beating Oman 2-0 in their first encounter Sunday, Jordan had played two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman. Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad.

Seven of Al Faisali's players, including top strikers Subhi Suleiman and Jiryes Tadros, joined the national team's camp in Muscat following their team's participation in the Arab Champions Cup in Morocco earlier this week.

The visit to Muscat is the third leg of the team's camps abroad. Other friendlies scheduled by the Jordan Soccer Federation include two matches against Syria, March 16 in Amman and March 23 in Damascus and two matches against the

Iraqi team in Amman.

Jordan's Asian Group 3 qualifiers start April 8 against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups.

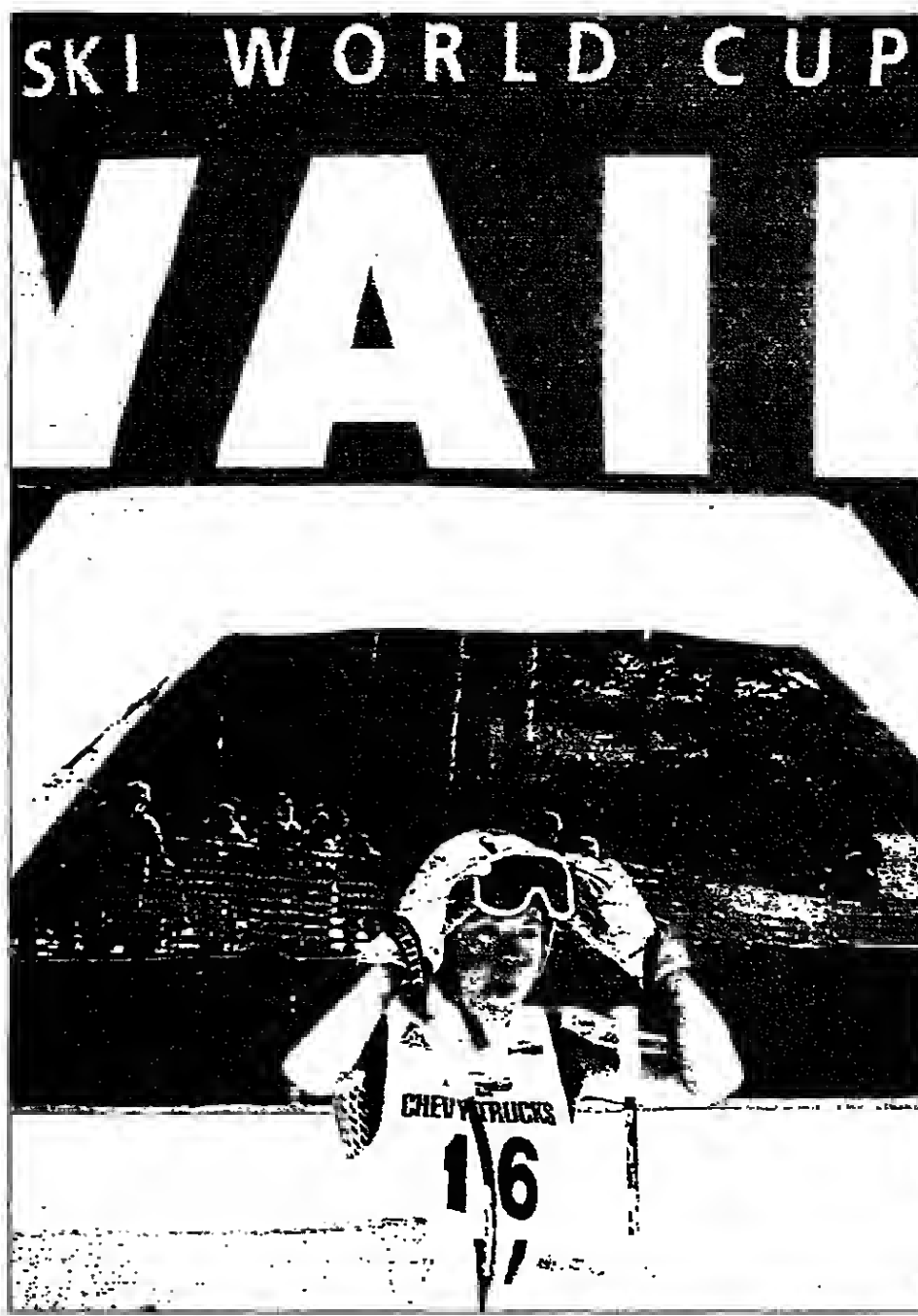
The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

The Kingdom's team includes Ahmad Abu Nasoub, Mu'taz Rishab, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Yousef Ammouri, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Amjad Taher, Faisal Ibrahim, Isam Mahmoud, Hussein Shananeh, Ra'fat Ali, Adnan Awad, Khaled Yousef, Walid Abdul Rahman, Munir Abu Hantash, Aref Hussein, Nart Yada, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Mohammad Mahadin, Jamal Abu Abed, Subhi Suleiman, Ja'far Hammad, Hassoueb Sheikh and Jiryes Tadros.

Skiing finals start fast today



Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden raises her goggles as she leaves the course in Vail, March 10, after training for the last World Cup downhill race of the season. Wiberg is the overall World Cup champion for the season (Reuters photo)

VAIL (R) — The World Cup finals start with a bang on Wednesday and could end with an historic triumph on Sunday following the last of the eight finals to be staged on the slopes of Vail mountain.

Spring seems to have sprung early here with warm sunshine coaxing resort revellers to doff their jackets. The finals, aptly, are launched by the most hotly contested individual title race of the Alpine skiing season — the women's downhill.

After seven women's downhill races, a mere two points separate Russian Warwara Zelenskaja and Heidi Zurbriggen of Switzerland (423-421). Crowding that duo is Renate Goetschl of Austria, 20 points behind the leading Russian, and the fastest down the course in training.

Zelenskaja, hoping to become the first Russian woman ever to claim a World Cup title, zoomed into the lead by sweeping a pair of downhillers on the course to be used at next year's winter Olympics in Japan.

The women's race will be followed by the men's downhill, a discipline that has been utterly dominated by the brilliant Luc Alphand of France.

But Alphand, who easily clinched his third straight title on the strength of four wins this season, has set his sights on an even grander target and is poised to become the first Frenchman since the great Jean-Claude Killy in 1968 to reign as

He holds a 117-point lead over 1994 overall champion Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway, but Alphand will have only one other chance to pad his total when he races in Thursday's Super-G.

Alphand, 31, is in position to claim that crown, too, since he holds a 69-point lead over Austrian Josef Strobl.

Aamodt will be a bystander in the downhill as the finals showcase the top 25 skiers in each discipline and he stands 27th in the event.

But the 25-year-old Norwegian all-rounder will get his chance to win points in the Super-G. Saturday's giant slalom and Sunday's slalom.

Half the season titles have already been decided. Austrian Thomas Sykora has won five times this season but has yet to shake off compatriot Thomas Stangassinger, who trails by 76 points and needs to win (100 points) or finish second (80 points), while Sykora stumbles.

Besides possibly settling the men's overall title, the slalom two seconds.

Double world champion Deborah Compagnoni of Italy is already assured the giant slalom title.

The men's giant slalom championship belongs to Swiss Michael Von Gruenigen, but Theien Amiez for the season's bronze.

overall champion. Moreover, Alphand, fourth overall last season, is trying to do it the hard way by focusing solely on the speed events.

Clermont, Creteil dream on after Cup draw

PARIS (R) — Fourth Division Clermont and Third Division Creteil will be looking to beat top flight sides for the second time in a row as they seek to emulate 1996 French Cup finalists Nimes.

The draw made on Sunday night pitted Clermont, who upset Paris St Germain on penalties after coming from 4-1 down to draw 4-4 in their third round tie, against relegation-threatened Nice in the quarter-finals.

Creteil, who humbled League Cup finalists Strasbourg 1-0, meet Guingamp. Third division Nimes reached the final last season, going down to Auxerre but earning themselves a place in the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Laval and Troyes, the second division sides who eliminated First Division leaders Monaco in the first round and league champions Auxerre in the third round respectively, meet each other in the quarter-finals, scheduled for March 29.

The only all first division clash pits Bordeaux against Montpellier in a repeat of their League Cup semifinal which Bordeaux won.

Sanchez advances, Huber out at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (R) — Top-seeded Arantxa Sanchez of Spain played a focused third round match to advance at the Evert Cup Moody, but third-seeded Anke Huber of Germany failed to move into the quarterfinals on Monday.

The fourth-ranked Sanchez who has out woo a tournament since Hamburg last may, looked extremely comfortable taking a 6-1 6-3 match over 38th-ranked Asa Carlsson of Sweden.

"Today's match shows that I was more focused and more concentrated and I was in control of the match since the beginning," Sanchez said. "I felt very confident and I was not missing so many shots. I was serving pretty well and having the control of the points pretty quickly so she was not having so many chances."

In contrast, the seventh-ranked Huber could not find a winning form, falling 6-4 6-3 to the 13th-seeded Nathalie Tauziat of France.

"I think I just couldn't find the rhythm and she played well," Huber said. "I didn't play well already in practice, so my confidence wasn't that good."

Two of the women's quarterfinal match-ups were decided Monday.

Sanchez will meet 33rd-ranked Sadrine Testud of France in one quarterfinal, while Tauziat takes on sixth-seeded Irina Spirlea of Romania.

This marks the first WTA Tour stop that Sanchez is working with eldest brother, Emilio, as her full-time coach.

Sanchez Vicario only lost three points on the way to winning the first four games of the match. Carlsson only held her serve in the fifth game of that first set.

The Spaniard took advantage of all five service break opportunities presented to the match — in the first, third and seventh games of the first set and the fourth and sixth games of the second set.

Carlsson was successful in breaking Sanchez Vicario's serve the one time she was in position to do so, in the third game of the second set, but it was of little consequence in the match.

"I had a very bad start," Carlsson said. "I was too impatient and I couldn't wait for the right ball to come. I played some good points, but it was too much up and down."

The 21st-ranked Tauziat kept Huber at bay with a variety of shot making that kept the German guessing.

The Frenchwoman served particularly well at the end of the match, scoring four of her six aces in her final two service games.

"I served pretty good in the second set," Tauziat said. "When I serve good I am really confident. I think the serve was a little bit the key of the match."

Huber led 3-1 in the first set, but fell apart from that point on.

At 2-2 in the second set, Tauziat took four of the last five games.

Make A Stand wins Cheltenham hurdle

CHELTHENHAM (AP) — Make A Stand led from start to finish Tuesday to win the 124,000-pounds (\$ 198,000) champion hurdle on the opening day of the prestigious Cheltenham Festival.

The six-year-old gelding, a 7-1 shot ridden by Tony McCoy, led by 12 lengths at one point and was five lengths clear at the finish of the two-mile (3.2 kilometer) race.

Make A Stand was trainer Martin Pipe's 16th festival winner and third for jockey McCoy.

"This horse is electric," McCoy said. "It's the most improved horse I've ever sat on."

Theatreworld, a 33-1 shot trained in Ireland and ridden by Aiden O'Brien, finished second, 3/4 of a length ahead of Space Trucker, another Irish contender trained by Jessica Harrington and with John Short aboard.

Large Action, which went off 7-2 favourite and was unbeaten over two miles since losing this race two years ago, was pulled up lame by jockey Jamie Osborne after clearing only two hurdles.

Collier Bay, last year's winner and 4-1 second favourite, was well behind the pack throughout the race and was pulled up by Graham Bradley before reaching the penultimate fence.

Courier and Mantilla eliminated from Champions Cup

INDIAN WELLS (R) — Felix Mantilla of Spain and Jim Courier of the United States were eliminated from the Champions Cup tennis tournament on the first round on Monday.

After breezing through the first six games of the match, the 12-seeded Mantilla was upset by 67th-ranked Sandon Stolle of Australia 0-6 6-3 6-3.

"This was a good win for me to beat someone in the top 20," Stolle said. "Today I couldn't scratch myself in the first set. I didn't want to give up though, because I knew I couldn't get any worse."

With the temperature up to 107 degrees Fahrenheit (41.6 C) in their match, the 37th-ranked Francisco Claver of Spain engineered the 23rd-ranked Courier's early exit from the tournament with a 6-4 4-6 6-4 victory.

"This I think is going to give me a lot of confidence," Claver said. "I am really happy about this victory because he has been number one in the world. And, I don't know, I think he is not in his best form now. But, anyway, he is Jim Courier and this gives you confidence. It is a big name in tennis."

The tournament lost another seed when 11th-seeded Tim Henman withdrew Monday because of an inflammation of his right elbow. Henman is expected to play in the upcoming Lipton championships.

Stolle was able to overcome a devastating first set to challenge Mantilla. In three service games in the first set, Stolle only had one game point.

In the second set, Stolle offered the Spaniard four break point opportunities, but was able to escape without harm. Stolle broke Mantilla's serve twice in the second set to even the score at one set apiece.

Stolle lost his serve in the third game of the final set, double faulting on the last point of the game. He went onto break Mantilla's serve in the fourth and eighth games to set up the victory.

The 16th seeded Courier, a former number-one ranked player and two-time champion at this tournament, just won his 20th career title in January at Doha, Qatar.

The American started the match with an ace, but that proved not to be indicative of how the match was to go

for Courier. He tended to hit the ball short throughout the match and was also too obstinate to try and change his strategy when it was not working.

"I am disappointed in the

way I played out there," Courier said. "I think I gave him many opportunities and he took them like most good players will do."

Courier lost his serve in the ninth game of the first

set. Claver lost his only serve in the 10th game of the second set, and courier lost his serve for the last time in the third game of the finals set.

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- 2-Healthy Diet & Weight Control Clinic: for advice on the types of food to avoid, and those to increase your intake of, in order to reduce your risk of cancer, and other diseases.
- 3-Stop Smoking Clinic: for those looking for better ways to quit this dangerous habit.
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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR BHARIF & TANNIAH HIRSH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ 7
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What action do you take?

A - Two easy. Even if North's range for a one-no-trump opening bid above 16-18 and partner is at the top of the range, game would be against the odds. A combined 25 points is more likely to produce nine tricks at no trump or 10 in a major when the points are divided 13-12 than 16-7. Pass.

Q. 2 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?

A - In principle, do not conceal a four-card major when responding to partner's minor-suit opening bid. Here, however, the spade suit is so shabby that we would not hesitate to make the descriptive jump to two no trump rather than respond one spade or one diamond.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ A Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ A Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass 3♣ Pass 4♣ Pass 5♣ Pass 6♣ Pass 7♣ Pass 8♣ Pass 9♣ Pass 10♣ Pass 11♣ Pass 12♣ Pass 13♣ Pass 14♣ Pass 15♣ Pass 16♣ Pass 17♣ Pass 18♣ Pass 19♣ Pass 20♣ Pass 21♣ Pass 22♣ Pass 23♣ Pass 24♣ Pass 25♣ Pass 26♣ Pass 27♣ Pass 28♣ Pass 29♣ Pass 30♣ Pass 31♣ Pass 32♣ Pass 33♣ Pass 34♣ Pass 35♣ Pass 36♣ Pass 37♣ Pass 38♣ Pass 39♣ Pass 40♣ Pass 41♣ Pass 42♣ Pass 43♣ Pass 44♣ Pass 45♣ Pass 46♣ Pass 47♣ Pass 48♣ Pass 49♣ Pass 50♣ Pass 51♣ Pass 52♣ Pass 53♣ Pass 54♣ Pass 55♣ Pass 56♣ Pass 57♣ Pass 58♣ Pass 59♣ Pass 60♣ Pass 61♣ Pass 62♣ Pass 63♣ Pass 64♣ Pass 65♣ Pass 66♣ Pass 67♣ Pass 68♣ Pass 69♣ Pass 70♣ Pass 71♣ Pass 72♣ Pass 73♣ Pass 74♣ Pass 75♣ Pass 76♣ Pass 77♣ Pass 78♣ Pass 79♣ Pass 80♣ Pass 81♣ Pass 82♣ Pass 83♣ Pass 84♣ Pass 85♣ Pass 86♣ Pass 87♣ Pass 88♣ Pass 89♣ Pass 90♣ Pass 91♣ Pass 92♣ Pass 93♣ Pass 94♣ Pass 95♣ Pass 96♣ Pass 97♣ Pass 98♣ Pass 99♣ Pass 100♣ Pass 101♣ Pass 102♣ Pass 103♣ Pass 104♣ Pass 105♣ Pass 106♣ Pass 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Yeltsin concerned over settlements; Netanyahu focuses on bilateral ties

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday he was concerned about Israel's plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, stressing Russia's commitment to the peace process.

A Kremlin statement said Mr. Yeltsin "voiced concern about Israel's unilateral steps in East Jerusalem," during talks here marked by "openness and trust."

Mr. Yeltsin said he hoped "the Israeli government, in the current situation and in future, will weigh up all the circumstances and take decisions aimed at achieving peace and stability in the Middle East."

Mr. Yeltsin urged respect for the peace accords already reached and "the earliest possible start to negotiations on the status of the Palestinian territories," pledging Russia's further commitment to the peace process.

Mr. Yeltsin also praised Russia's growing ties with Israel and told Mr. Netanyahu that the friction between the countries was a thing of the past.

"Our countries and their leaders have passed the stage of prejudice and are now energetically moving toward each other. This concerns political as well as economic and trade relations," Mr. Yeltsin said.

The trade turnover between the two countries, now over \$400 million, "can be significantly increased, granted the goodwill of both sides," the president told Mr. Netanyahu at the start of their Kremlin meeting, Russian news agencies reported.

Earlier Tuesday, Mr. Netanyahu, cheered by a joyous crowd of Russian Jews, vowed to keep Jerusalem "united" and under Israeli control.

"I hope... that we will be able to bless you in the unified Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, which forever will stay united and under Israel's sovereignty," Mr. Netanyahu

said. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat raised his own concerns about Jerusalem during a visit to Moscow last month. Mr. Arafat held talks with Mr. Yeltsin and was received by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II.

Mr. Netanyahu, speaking in Hebrew at the ornate hall of Moscow's main choral synagogue, otherwise avoided Middle East politics, praising the changes that have allowed Jewish religion and culture to blossom in Russia.

Security was heavy, with Israeli plainclothes agents, Russian police and several elite guards brandishing Kalashnikov rifles around and inside the synagogue. In the hall, hundreds of Jews, including young school students wearing traditional skullcaps, interrupted Mr. Netanyahu's speech with applause.

"You see in front of you a Jew, an elated Jew," said Mr. Netanyahu. "Here, we are touching the very roots of Jewish existence."

Russian and Israeli officials say Mr. Netanyahu's two-day trip, which comes at a difficult time for the Middle East peace process, will help promote the peace efforts and bilateral ties.

But Mr. Netanyahu says he will mostly concentrate on improving bilateral and especially economic relations with Russia, rather than seeking its active participation in the Middle East peace moves.

While Israel is relying on U.S. mediation, Russia — a co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process — wants to reassert its role on the world stage.

Mr. Netanyahu wants Moscow to pressure Syria into renewing the stalled peace talks with Israel. He also will be seeking to convince Russian leaders to stop military and nuclear cooperation with Iran, where Russia is building a nuclear reactor.

Israel and the United States are against the project, saying it may help Tehran achieve nuclear weapons capability.

Shortly before Mr. Netanyahu's departure from Israel, media there revealed that his chief of staff, Avigdor Lieberman, held secret talks last week with senior Russian figures about a possible multi-billion-dollar gas deal.

Israel army radio said Mr. Netanyahu hoped to link a contract to purchase Russian gas to ending Russian sales of arms and high-technology to Iran and Syria.

Israeli officials declined to comment on the reported gas deal but said arms and technology sales to Syria and Iran by Russia would be high on Mr. Netanyahu's agenda in Moscow.

Mr. Netanyahu was traveling with a 25-member delegation including a large group of businessmen interested in boosting bilateral trade and tourism, officials said.

A senior Israeli official said Monday that the Jewish state will act to prevent the arming of Iran with ballistic missiles if persuasion fails to do the job.

"Such arming constitutes a threat to Israel's very existence and we cannot sit back with our arms folded," Israeli public television reported the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, as saying.

The official was part of Mr. Netanyahu's delegation which arrived in Moscow Monday night.

During his visit to Washington Feb. 14, Mr. Netanyahu expressed concern about the provision of ballistic missiles to Iran, Iraq and Syria.

"Dominant countries like Iraq and Iran and for that matter Syria, are arming themselves feverishly with ballistic missiles, are preparing warheads, chemical and biological and if Iraq and Iran had their way, nuclear warheads," Mr. Netanyahu said in an address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a policy research centre.

The weaponry "could change the balance of power in the region... change the map for peace," he warned.

Arafat suspends all contacts with Israel

(Continued from page 1)

The growing crisis of the past few days has been accompanied by daily clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian stone throwers in the West Bank. On Tuesday, an Israeli soldier guarding a Jewish West Bank settlement was stabbed and seriously wounded, and Israeli troops arrested two Palestinian suspects.

"Israel is pushing us into a corner, making us desperate," Mohammad Dahlan, a senior Palestinian security official, told the Maariv daily. "The street is heating up and about to boil."

Mr. Dahlan said Palestinian police would prevent the use of firearms, but left open the possibility that protesters might resort to stones and bottles, as they did in the 1987-1993 uprising against Israeli occupation.

Being the weaker partner in the negotiations, the threat of violence remains the Palestinian's most successful tool.

The uprising led to the peace talks. Three days of gunbattles in September between Palestinian police and Israeli troops brought U.S. intervention, got Mr. Netanyahu focused on the peace talks and in the end helped produce an agreement on a troop pullback in Hebron.

A senior Palestinian official said Tuesday that Mr. Arafat has ordered all high-level

contacts with Israel stopped. Mr. Arafat has refused to take phone calls from Mr. Netanyahu in recent days.

"Contacts have been suspended. It's a cold war. Nothing is moving and nothing will move until Israel hides by the agreements," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Netanyahu's top foreign policy adviser, Dore Gold, accused the Palestinians of brinkmanship, and said threats of violence might backfire. "It could be some of Mr. Arafat's advisers are suggesting to him that by cutting the lines of communication, he can create a crisis and therefore bring in third parties," Mr. Gold told the Associated Press.

The last high-level contact between the two sides took place on Monday evening — a meeting between Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo that failed to calm the tensions.

Mr. Mordechai told Mr. Abed Rabbo that Israel would not reconsider its recent decisions, including plans to build a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

"There was no need to talk, because the Israelis don't want to talk. They just want to dictate the terms," Mr. Abed Rabbo told the Associated Press.

Palestinian negotiator Saeh Erekat said Israel has reject-

ed Palestinian proposals to sit together and review whether Israel's recent decisions violated the peace accords.

The Palestinians believe they should be in control of 90 per cent

of the West Bank by mid-1998 and that the scope of each withdrawal should be negotiated. They also argue that construction in Jerusalem violates the spirit of the peace accords, under which the status of the city is to be determined in future negotiations.

In the atmosphere of crisis, Israelis and Palestinians alike saw Tuesday's knife attack as a signal that Palestinian frustrations could erupt into spontaneous violence or calculated attacks by radical elements.

"What else can we expect when there is nothing going on in the negotiations," said Mr. Erekat.

"The Israeli interpretation of negotiations is to tell us what to do and, if we don't except them, then 'to hell with you'," he told AFP.

Mr. Arafat and senior members of the PNA have carefully avoided inciting violence, but hardline Palestinian movements have threatened attacks and even Arafat aides have warned the situation could get out of hand.

Sudan rebels claim advance on town

ASMARA (R) — Sudanese rebels said on Tuesday they were closing in on the major town of Yei in south Sudan and had captured supplies dropped by parachute from besieged government troops.

Yassir Arman, spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), said rebels had captured several garrisons around the southern Sudanese city of Juba and controlled the road to Yei.

He said SPLA rebels had captured an army garrison at Baze, eight kilometres from Kaya town, which is 30 kilometres north of the Ugandan border. The rebels said on Sunday they had taken Kaya, which Khartoum said was attacked by Ugandan forces.

Mr. Arman said rebels had seized Kenyi garrison, putting them in "firm control" of the major road running from Yei to Juba city.

"We are now only 500 metres from the trenches of Yei garrison. The NIF (National Islamic Front) tried to parachute supplies to the besieged forces at Yei this morning," he said.

"We captured most of it, and the rest landed between us and they were unable to reach it."

Speaking in the Eritrean capital, which is the headquarters of a Sudanese opposition alliance, Mr. Arman said the rebels had killed more than 300 members of government forces in Kaya town.

He said rebel forces were also besieging government troops who escaped Kaya and reached Morobo, close to the Ugandan and Zairean borders and south of the government-controlled city of Juba.

"SPLA forces on the axis of Juba-Yei captured Loka garrison, which is 110 kilometres from Juba and 50 kilometres from Yei," said Arman. He said they were also laying siege to Lainya garrison, 100 kilometres south of Juba, and had captured army garrisons at Koya and Limbe at a main junction on the Juba road.

He said the dead included a colonel, two lieutenant-colonels, a major and five lieutenants. Rebels had captured six artillery pieces, T-55 tanks, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank cannons.

The advances reported by the rebels on Sunday were the first indication for several weeks of progress in a rebel offensive launched in eastern Sudan in January that spread to the south. Uganda, bordering southern Sudan and strongly opposed to the Islamist government in Khartoum, denied on Monday a Sudanese army charge that its forces attacked Kaya and Yei.

The SPLA led by John Garang has been fighting Khartoum since 1983, demanding greater autonomy for the mainly Christian and animist south of Sudan from the Muslim and Arabised north.

Uganda's government-owned new vision newspaper said on Monday Ugandan troops had sealed off the border with south Sudan in the west Nile area and the SPLA had attacked Sudanese positions 30 kilometres from the Ugandan border.

The newspaper said residents of the northern Ugandan town of Arua were kept awake by sounds of the battles inside Sudan. Sudan has accused Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda of fighting alongside the rebels, who want to spark a popular uprising to topple President Omar Hassan Al Bashir. The three states deny involvement.



Diana's motives questioned in visit to homeless hostel

LONDON (AFP) — Diana, princess of Wales, on Monday visited a homeless emergency cold weather shelter in a notorious red light district in central London — but found her motives questioned by those whose cause she hoped to highlight. The princess allowed press and television cameras to follow her meeting youngsters at a disused office building in King's Cross run by homeless charity Centre Point and funded by a government "rough-sleeper" initiative. She chatted with homeless people in a sitting room decorated with their artwork and poems, and posters warning of the danger of drugs. Portia, 17, told Diana how she left home after an argument with her mother. But afterwards Portia told BBC Television news: "To be honest, I think it's just upper class guilt." The hostel, which has been running since January, will provide food, bed and shelter for 47 homeless young people until the end of March. Diana, who is patron of Centre Point, agreed to make a public visit to help boost the charity's work.

Two women on trial for rape

GRENOBLE, France (AFP) — Two women and a man went on trial here on Monday for raping a man because he could not pay his 10,450-franc (\$2,000) bar bill. A bar hostess, a customer and the woman who ran the bar were accused of beating up a 26-year-old man, forcing him to fondle the landlady's dog and hugging him with a brush bandle. The court heard evidence from a psychiatric expert who said "in our society, a man who has been raped is worse off than a violated woman, especially as this rape was committed by two women." The trial was due to end on Wednesday.

Mayor bans gays from 'love motels'

BUENOS AIRES (R) — An Argentine town has banned gays from using pay-by-the-hour "love motels" for amorous encounters by ruling that all couples admitted must be "without exception a man and a woman." But the mayor of Malvinas Argentinas, a small blue-collar town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, on Monday denied charges of discrimination leveled by angry gay and lesbian groups. "We would be discriminating if in this new by-law we had specified that fat people can't use them, or that preferably only blondes with blue eyes should go there," Mayor Jesus Cariglinio told reporters.

Israeli woman, 93, suspected of drug dealing

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli police have arrested a 93-year-old woman on suspicion of drug dealing, Channel Two television said on Monday. Wearing a red bathrobe and a white kerchief, the woman described as Israel's oldest drug suspect was shown shuffling down the corridors of a police station after being arrested at her apartment in the port city of Ashdod. The television said she denied selling heroin out of her flat. Police had no trouble gaining entry to the flat because the woman's eyesight had deteriorated to the point where she could not make out who her clients were, the report said.

U.S. protests Israeli raids on NDI office

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli police received a tongue-lashing from the United States after they targeted a U.S.-funded organisation in their hunt for Palestinian National Authority (PNA) offices in Arab East Jerusalem, officials said Tuesday.

Police barged into the offices of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) twice over the past two weeks, most recently on Monday, accusing the group of being linked to self-styled authority, NDI Director Sean Carroll said.

"Two plainclothes policemen entered the National Democratic Institute two weeks ago when I was not here and began to question the Palestinian staff in a most aggressive and unpleasant manner," Mr. Carroll said.

"They said, 'you are an office of the Palestinian (National) Authority, aren't you?'"

Police returned on Monday and questioned Mr. Carroll himself, but this time their manner was "more cordial," he said.

The institute is affiliated with the American Democratic Party and funded by the U.S. International Development Agency, Mr. Carroll said.

"For the past 18 months it has been running a programme to educate the Palestinian legislative council in democratic skills," he said.

the PNA government from operating in Jerusalem pending determination of the city's final status in a permanent peace settlement.

"We received information that Palestinian (National) Authority activity was taking place in this institute," police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said Tuesday.

"But when we were shown proof that it is funded by the United States, the suspicion was removed."

Duncan McGuinness, spokesman for the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, said American diplomats took up the matter with the Israeli government.

"We thought the police should not be doing this," he told the AP. "They should be aware of what the NDI is, and I think they are aware of this now."

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk contacted Israeli officials after the first raid to "explain to them what NDI is," said Duncan McGuinness, press officer for the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem.

After the second incident "he explained more sharply. The police assured us it would not happen again," Mr. McGuinness said.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter worked with the institute to monitor the Palestinian elections in January 1996. At the time, Mr. Carter accused Israeli police of keeping some Palestinian voters from reaching the polls.

Saddam's half-brother calls for reforms

AMMAN (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's half-brother Barzan Takriti has called for a series of political reforms to improve the country's image abroad, sources close to Mr. Takriti said here Tuesday.

Mr. Takriti, who is Iraq's representative to the United Nations in Geneva, sent a letter to President Saddam calling for the decision-making Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) to be scrapped and parliament to be dissolved.

He proposed himself as prime minister in a new government of technocrats, the sources said.

The letter came in response to efforts from President Saddam to reconcile with Mr. Takriti, who has not set foot in Iraq since 1990 and has laid down conditions for his return from Geneva.

Mr. Takriti has now offered to use his "good relations" with some Western countries to try and lift the U.N. sanctions in force against Iraq since its

August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

President Saddam has yet to respond to the letter, the sources said, adding that Mr. Takriti insists on holding the post of prime minister.

The Iraqi president has three other half-brothers — Dham, who has died, Waiban and Sabawi — from whom his mother was remarried to Ibrahim Hassan, his uncle.

Iraq ready for prison visits

Iraq has said for the first time it was ready to allow Red Cross staff into its prisons but has yet to agree under what conditions, a spokesman said in Geneva on Tuesday.

Talks on the modalities of visits are scheduled in Baghdad next week between an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation and Iraqi authorities, ICRC spokesman Rolin Wavre said.

Iraq said it was ready to authorise

visits to political prisoners during a meeting in Geneva on Feb. 18 of the tripartite commission grouping representatives of the ICRC, Iraq, Kuwait and the Gulf war allies who vanquished the Iraqi army.

The talks, which are held regularly, focus on some 600 Kuwaitis reported disappeared since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

However, if the ICRC is given access to prisons, this will not necessarily shed light on those who are missing, Mr. Wavre said.

If the Kuwaitis are in Iraq, Baghdad should have declared the fact and the government wants to hide the prisoners, it would be easy to fool the ICRC, Mr. Wavre said.

It is impossible to say if and when an accord will be signed.

The ICRC lays down strict rules, such as free access to prisoners, meetings without witnesses and repeat visits, according to Mr. Wavre.

Yemeni captors release Germans

SANAA (AFP) — Seven German motorcycle tourists kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen have been freed after being held hostage for a week, the German embassy here announced Tuesday.

They were released Monday night, an embassy spokesman told AFP.

He said the seven Germans were "fine" and were being taken to the town of Sayun, some 500 kilometres east of here, in Hadramut province. They were expected to arrive in Sayun late Tuesday.

The seven Germans, all men aged between 30 and 40, were snatched by around 50 armed tribesmen on March 3 while touring the east of the country on motorbikes.

They were seized near the town of Tarim, around 750 kilometres southeast of Sanaa, and held in a mountain hideaway.

A Yemeni Interior Ministry

official in Sanaa said: "The release of the Germans took place peacefully after an agreement between the kidnappers and the authorities."

The official, who asked to remain anonymous, declined to say whether any ransom had been paid or whether the authorities were pursuing the kidnappers, insisting only that "a friendly agreement led to their liberation."

The kidnappers were demanding between \$7 and \$12 million from the Yemeni government as compensation for money swindled from their tribe by a car trafficker.

Mohammad Ali, whose Al Khalifa Travel Agency organised the Germans' trip, said Monday that no ransom would be paid, but that the authorities had agreed to track down and arrest the alleged trafficker — Mohammad Bahdila.

Bahdila bought the cars on credit from the tribes and never paid for them. He was arrested by police but escaped, and the tribes believe the authorities helped him, police sources said.

At the weekend, the Yemeni government dispatched reinforcements backed by helicopters to surround the tribesmen's stronghold in a bid to put pressure on the kidnappers.

Around 80 foreigners have been kidnapped by Yemeni tribes since 1993 and all have been freed unharmed. They are usually used as bargaining chips to obtain concessions from the government.

The last kidnap victim, a U.S. engineer working for the Halliburton oil company, was held for 17 days before being released on Feb. 27.